



MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. RICHARD CHAPPLE WHALLEY, B.D.

LATE RECTOR OF CHELWOOD;

ILLUSTRATED BY

SELECT LETTERS AND SERMONS.

BY

JOHN S. HARFORD, ESQ., D. C. L.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET AND CO., 21, BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCXLVI.

BX5199

W5 A3

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR	v. to xlv.
LETTERS	1 to 128
SERMON I.	131
The world and work of Nature, wonderful as they are, not comparable in glory to the world and work of Grace in Man's Redemption. <i>A Sermon for Christmas Day.</i>	
SERMON II.	152
The Bondage and Condemnation of the Law abolished, and the Privileges of the Gospel secured to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.	
SERMON III.	170
The Gospel Message.	
SERMON IV.	196
The Perfection of Jesus Christ the Salvation of his People. <i>A Sermon for Good Friday.</i>	
SERMON V.	215
On Rising with Christ. <i>An Easter Sunday Sermon.</i>	
SERMON VI.	235
Increasing diligence in doing the will of God, and a progress in holy obedience, the test of a true Christian.	



INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR.

THE following collection of Letters and Sermons will prove, it is hoped, an acceptable offering to the Christian Public. Their author, the Rev. Richard Chapple Whalley, was an honor and an ornament to the clerical profession, one whose superior talents and eminent piety secured to him, while living, general esteem and regard, and whose memory and example are embalmed in the affectionate veneration of all, whether of his flock or of his friends, who survive him.

His only son, the late Rev. R. T. Whalley, Rector of Yeovilton, Somersetshire, intended to have published some of his father's sermons, to which he would probably have prefixed a biographical sketch of his life and character. His own lamented decease finally frustrated any such intention. The office is therefore undertaken by a friend, who has had little more to do in relation to the Sermons, than to correct various inaccuracies of expression, such as are sure to creep into papers not prepared for publication. Private names and matter have been excluded from the letters, with only one exception. They are published as brief epitomes of the opinions of an eminent and experienced Christian Minister, upon many important points of faith and practice, and also as illustrative of the spiritual and mental qualities ascribed to him in the following Memoir.

The life of the best men is often the most barren of amusing or exciting incidents, and this is especially true of clergymen, whose vocation in general confines them to a concentrated sphere of duty, and to a series of acts and functions, the most sacred and ennobling, it is true, but usually monotonous. The circumstances, however, under which Mr. Whalley's religious character was formed and ripened, and the mental conflicts which he endured before he was brought to submit to the humbling doctrines of the cross, are fraught with interest and instruction.

The absence of documents illustrative of that considerable portion of his life, which was spent, as he deemed, in a state of irreligion, will necessarily confine the editor to brief and general statements. Though general, however, he may venture to say they are authentic, since they were derived either from the lips of Mr. Whalley himself, or from those of his friends and relatives, or the result of his own personal observation. After this notice, the editor conceives he shall best place Mr. Whalley before his readers, by describing his own first impressions of him, and then by relating various particulars of his life and character.

My acquaintance with him commenced in the year 1809, and led to a friendship which continued till his death, in 1816. His life and whole demeanor beautifully exemplified the noblest and purest features of the Christian character. The cast of his countenance was highly intellectual: the features were fine, and over them was diffused an expression of humility, gentleness, and benignity, which silently, but irresistibly, attracted all who approached him. His piety, to use the words applied by Miss Talbot to Bishop Benson, "though awfully strict,

was inexpressibly amiable."* Though nothing but the great interests of Christianity and its final consequences, appeared capable of agitating his own breast with any strong emotions of hope or fear, he was ever ready affectionately to sympathize with the joys and sorrows of his friends and fellow creatures. A winning cheerfulness, an affectionate kindness, were blended in him with great refinement of mind and manners. Inflexible on the side of what he deemed to be Christian truth, he defended or explained his opinions with unfailing consideration for the feelings or the prejudices of others, and with all the courtesy of a man who had lived much in polished society. His manners were those of a high-bred gentleman of the old school. Though fitted by education and by knowledge of the world to adorn any society, his chief delight was to hold intercourse with those in whom he beheld any traces of the image of that divine Saviour, in whom was all his trust, and the promotion of whose kingdom in the hearts of men was his first and great object. Such, however imperfectly sketched, was Mr. Whalley; but such he had not always been. There was a time when his affections were engrossed by secular and worldly objects, and the great truths of Christianity were regarded by him, not only with indifference, but even with aversion. The following particulars will illustrate these statements.

Mr. Whalley was the youngest son of the Rev. John Whalley, D. D., Master of Peter House, Cambridge, and Regius Professor of Divinity in that university. His mother was a daughter of Francis Squire, Chan-

* Vide Archbp. Secker's Life, p. 33.

cellor of Wells. He was born in the year 1748. His father died while he was an infant. Where he was educated, I have not been able to ascertain; but his attainments, as a scholar, were such, as prove that it must have been at some superior seminary. A Latin inscription from his own pen, on a tomb in Wells Cathedral, in memory of his wife and of his son Francis, a boy of great promise, who prematurely died at Eton, proves that he composed in that language with point and elegance.

Mr. Whalley, as he approached manhood, manifested no inclination for any of the learned professions. A passionate love of the fine arts disposed him to visit Italy, and to make painting the object of his peculiar study. It seems to have been, at this time, his ambition to devote himself to it professionally. For this reason, probably, it was, that he did not matriculate at either of the universities. To Italy, therefore, he turned his step soon after he was of age, and spent several years amidst the great works of art, and the enchanting objects of that classic land. The only picture from his pencil, now in possession of his family, is a portrait, in oil, of his wife, painted after his return to England. It is a justly-admired production, displaying much taste in the attitude, and peculiar skill in the disposition of the light and shadow. Many of his sketches from nature are also in their possession, chiefly made at a subsequent period in France. They display great power of delineating architectural objects with fidelity, though, as respects the general features of landscape, they are deficient in freedom of execution. They are, in fact,

more like exquisitely elaborated etchings, than free sketches. Painting, except it be landscape painting, is a sedentary employment, requiring much preparatory study of drawing, sculpture, and anatomy. There is no royal road to eminence in any profession, and many are the cases in which the enthusiasm of genius is checked by physical infirmity. Mr. Whalley, after pursuing his pictorial studies for some time with much ardor, found his health giving way under the needful confinement, and came to the conclusion that he was incapable of sustaining the requisite application for acquiring eminence as an artist. But though the particular object of his visiting Italy was thus frustrated, he carefully viewed and studied its fine scenery, and its monuments of ancient and modern grandeur. How vividly he caught the spirit of the scenes and objects with which he was thus rendered familiar, will be apparent from the following expressive reference to the features of the Roman Campagna, written to myself in Rome, in the year 1816, after a lapse of forty years since he had beheld them.

“Rome is a place where the scenery is altogether different from any thing you have met with before, or that can be met with, I think, any where else. Those long tracts of road within the ancient walls, in which one may tire oneself amidst varying scenes and objects of mutilated, mouldering grandeur; fragments of temples, baths and aqueducts, interspersed with gardens, vineyards, and groves of cypresses; and every now and then a modern oratory, formed out of some relic of heathen superstition; each stone almost of the walls one walks between, having some stamp of interest upon it. These

things altogether make a strange mixed impression upon the mind; at least, they did so upon mine; an impression of soothing delightful melancholy, which would now be heightened by considerations and feelings which I was then quite incapable of."

Unhappily for Mr. Whalley, he not only plucked the flowers of foreign travel, but imbibed the moral poison which then pervaded the continent. The French infidel philosophy was at this time (about A. D. 1771,) extremely popular. The demoralizing, anarchical, and destructive tendencies of that philosophy, had not as yet fully developed themselves. It claimed an intimate alliance with reason and liberty; it denounced oppression; it derided the strictness of Christian morality; it offered tempting licence to the sensual passions; and by these means enlisted on its side the wits of the age, and a great portion of the higher classes. Dressed out by the genius and the eloquence of Voltaire, Rousseau, and others, in captivating colours, its flimsy sophistries were hailed as acknowledged truths. Already the fall of *superstition*, the name by which the infidel school designated not only the corrupt church of Rome, but even the purest forms of Christianity, was confidently predicted; and the coming glories of the age of reason and liberty were loudly proclaimed. Error seldom makes any great progress, except by entering into alliance with some imposing principles of truth. The despotism which pervaded the monarchical constitution of France, and the heavy burdens and restrictions which it imposed upon the people, but from which the privileged orders were free, furnished a ready, nay, in many respects,

a just occasion for the political votaries of that philosophy to enlist the feelings of the masses on their side. They were the avowed friends of liberty and the people, and were therefore able to inspire them with a blind confidence in the ultimate issue of their proposed innovations. The crisis at length arrived which was to put all these principles to a searching test. The French Revolution occurred: the superstitious of the Romish Church disappeared for the moment, and many an ancient badge of tyranny and oppression; but with them was also swept away all reverence for the fundamental principles of religion and morality, of equity and order. The voice of true liberty, tempered by reason and sobered by experience, was drowned in that of faction. A bloody harvest of crime and anarchy, of confiscation and rapine, was reaped, under the name of liberty, amidst the barbarous horrors and proscriptions of the reign of terror. France oscillated for a series of years amidst the maddest excesses of unbridled democracy, and at length settled down into a stern military despotism.

Mr. Whalley was for a time one of those who partook of the delusion which led to such fatal consequences. He delighted in the writings of Rousseau and Voltaire, and he learnt from them to regard Christianity as another name for superstition. In relating to me this painful portion of his mental history, he manifested feelings of remorse and self-abasement which could not well be exceeded. He felt and acknowledged, that in imbibing these sophistries he had submitted them to no sufficient test, and that they found him culpably ignorant of the various links of that mighty chain of evidence which establishes the truth and certainty of the

Christian revelation. The scepticism of many men no less accomplished or gifted than Mr. Whalley, may be traced to the same cause in which his own originated—*religious indifference*. They have never studied the evidences of Christianity with care and candor, nor the Bible with prayer to God, and with a sincere and anxious desire after truth. They have adopted their creed as a matter of course, in the shape and form in which their education presented it to them. They have acquiesced in the conclusions of orthodoxy, and have taken their baptismal vow upon themselves, without any just sense of the obligations and responsibilities thereby incurred. Their practice has therefore been an habitual infraction of that vow. Their religion has floated in their heads, but has never penetrated their hearts. Resting on no solid foundation, it has yielded to unfounded objections and plausible sophistries, when these have been presented to their minds in alliance with wit and ridicule, fashion and example.

Mr. Whalley at length returned to his native country, with opinions, tastes, and habits uncongenial with those of the friends and associates among whom he was to live. He missed the exciting objects of art in which he had taken such delight, and happily he found among his countrymen few admirers of the French philosophy. The elegance of his manners, his refined taste, and his familiarity with foreign scenes and objects, naturally made his company sought after; but there was a hauteur and reserve about him which was justly deemed repulsive. His elder brother, the late Dr. Whalley, once said to me, "You are well acquainted, I believe, with my brother Richard; but unless you could compare

him, as I can, with his former self, you can scarcely imagine what religion has done for him. I well remember him as one of the proudest and most fastidious of human beings. He was, in fact, the proudest man I have ever known." The late Mrs. Hannah More and her sisters, who were well acquainted with him at the time now referred to, have occasionally described him to me as a man of refined elegance, but chilling fastidiousness. Scepticism, when it is based, as it usually is, on presumption and ignorance, is in the same proportion arrogant and uncompromising. Voltaire, with all his wit and powers of ridicule, was in this sense grossly ignorant, as has often been proved;* yet he touches on theological topics with the confidence of an oracle: and from scepticism, in all probability, originated much of that peculiar pride which marked Mr. Whalley, and which cost him in the retrospect the sincerest grief and self-abasement. To the absence of religious control is also to be ascribed the too great dominion which a naturally hot temper had obtained over him; and which singularly contrasted with the meekness and benignity of his subsequent demeanor.

Among the friends who lamented his sceptical opinions, there was one who not only urged upon him the duty of further inquiry, but intreated him to bring

* See in particular the able French work, by the Abbé Guenée, entitled, "*Lettres de quelques Juifs à M. de Voltaire*," in which the ignorance, bad faith, blunders, and innumerable contradictions, scattered up and down the various works in which he has maligned Christianity, are exposed with equal learning, wit, and sarcasm. Voltaire quailed beneath the infliction, and the work has become a standard one.

7

those opinions to the test of such a book as Butler's Analogy. Happily, for his own future peace, he followed this friend's advice, and devoted himself to its perusal. It met and refuted the arguments upon which he had most confidently relied as subversive of revelation. That profound work, it is well known, converts what appear, on a superficial view, to be objections to the scheme of Christianity, into illustrations of its divine origin and truth. It proves that what are called difficulties in the religion of grace, apply with equal force to the government of the natural world, and to the constitution of nature; in which, though replete with general and convincing indications of the wisdom, goodness, and equity of the great Creator, partial appearances of evil and irregularity are mingled: it shews that the objections thence made to the natural and moral government of God, are results of human ignorance, resolving themselves into the incompetence of a finite being to see through the counsels and to penetrate the ultimate designs of an Infinite Intelligence: that a creature of such limited views and capacity as man, can take in at best only a minute part of the general plan and purpose upon which such a Being acts, and is as incapable of tracing out the relations of the several parts of that plan to each other, as of comprehending their final relation to the whole: that the monarchy of the universe is a dominion unbounded in extent and endless in duration, and that therefore whatever in it is imperfectly understood, must in all reason be interpreted by that which is plain and obvious.

And the same is shewn to be true of the Christian dispensation. It also is a system too vast in its relations

for human comprehension, and is therefore imperfectly understood. It bears upon it the impress of the same glorious attributes which are radiant on the face of nature, united to peculiar characteristics of its own; wisdom, justice, love, mercy, being stamped upon it in immeasurable degrees. Its end is the divine glory and human happiness, in a way and by means of God's contriving; necessarily mysterious therefore, and inscrutable in many of its bearings, to a mortal capacity. Its morality is worthy of its heavenly origin, and if acted upon would convert earth into a paradise of peace and love. The objections against the Christian system most relied upon are singularly analogous to those which have been urged against the constitution of nature, and they resolve themselves into the same cause, *the ignorance of man*. The difficulties in each case are just such as a finite being must expect to meet, when it attempts to scan the counsels of Infinity. Enough of light and truth, of wisdom and goodness, are stamped upon each system, to challenge faith and obedience, love, and adoration; enough of obscurity rests upon both to exercise faith, to test love and obedience, and to mingle awe with adoration. Arguing from what is known to what is unknown, from what is revealed to what is unexplained, from what can be comprehended by a finite being to what is incomprehensible, doubt is quelled, humility is inculcated, faith is confirmed, seeming contradictions and irregularities are justly inferred to be consistent with wisdom and goodness, for reasons and in ways inscrutable by man. To acquiesce in his present ignorance, to be intent upon his obvious duties, and "by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory,

honor, and immortality,"* are shewn to be the course prescribed to him by reason and religion. And be it further remembered, that all these are considerations apart from the positive evidence which establishes the truth and authority of divine revelation. *That* evidence, both external and internal, still remains to be added in all its plenitude to the force of these considerations. Tradition, history, prophecy, miracles, providence, testimony the most various and incontestible, unite their converging rays to illustrate the external evidence. And as respects that which is more especially internal, who can deny the striking adaptation of Christianity to the exigencies of a world bursting with sin and sorrow? The eye is not more perfectly adapted to the reception of light, than is the divine philosophy of the holy scriptures to the deep corruptions, the guilty fears, the corroding sorrows, and the festering anxieties of the human heart.

Of all this Mr. Whalley finally became convinced; but as yet the fruits of his conversion were imperfect. He cast away his sceptical opinions, he did homage to the truth of the Bible, he saw through and rejected the sophistries to which he had yielded credence. These were important points gained, and the change in his opinions wrought a beneficial change also in many respects, in his tastes, pursuits, and habits. But though his judgment and reason were convinced, his heart was not yet duly affected. He was too much inclined to view the subject of his late inquiry as a dry question of truth and error, without a proper regard to the weighty

* Romans ii. 7.

consequences and obligations consequent on his faith as a Christian. He therefore felt no depth of remorse for years unprofitably spent, for talents misapplied, and for mercies abused. Pride and fastidiousness still closely adhered to him. Neither does it appear, judging from his own communications to myself, that any such salutary considerations were suggested to him by his friends. Satisfied with his disavowal of infidel opinions, and with the general correctness of his life and manners, they ceased to be anxious about him, and perhaps were little qualified to probe the depth of his spiritual maladies.

In 1775, he married Elizabeth Frances, youngest daughter of the Rev. John Paine, Canon of Wells. It was a match of mutual attachment, and imparted to both, during twenty years, much domestic felicity. Two children were the fruit of this union.

In the year 1786, Mr. Whalley again visited the continent, accompanied by his wife and children. He spent many months in the South of France, more especially at Tours, and amused his leisure by drawing and studying from nature. During his stay there, it was proposed to him to take orders, and to hold the living of Horsington, in Somersetshire, for his nephew, as yet a minor. This offer he accepted; and, leaving his family at Tours, returned home in May, 1787, for ordination, which was conferred on him in the June following. Though probably prudential considerations had great weight in prompting him to this decision, he entered on his important office with the intention of discharging its functions in a respectable and conscientious manner; but when, at a subsequent period, he became convinced that at this time he neither

comprehended the real end and aim of the gospel, nor had any just sense of the weight and responsibility of the pastoral office, he felt, as many others under similar circumstances have finally been brought to feel, that though regularly called, on the part of the church, to the ministerial office, the inward calling of the Holy Ghost had been wanting.

Horsington became his residence, with occasional intervals, during the ensuing thirteen years. In what spirit he discharged his clerical duties, and what were the mutual feelings of himself and his flock, his own words will best describe. They occur in a sermon, in which he refers to this very subject, written after religion had obtained an entire ascendancy in his mind and heart. It will be seen with what honesty he touches on his own past deficiencies as a minister of Christ, at the same time that he gives himself credit for having always acted in a friendly, charitable, and honorable spirit towards the flock committed to his care:—"As to *my services* towards *you*, brethren, for the Lord's sake, I scarcely know in what manner to mention them. I shall only say to you, that even from my first entering in among you, and before I had at all well considered the work I had undertaken, or known any thing of my insufficiency for it, or received any help from above to *make* me sufficient,—any of that light which has since so clearly shewn me what are the true doctrines of the gospel, and the inestimable treasure of knowledge wrapped up in the written word,—I never was a direct and gross hypocrite among you, preaching what I did not at least *persuade* myself I believed, or professing a concern for your souls which I did not

after a *manner* feel. Many efforts I certainly made to restrain, by the grace of God, though without knowing what that grace was, and therefore, no wonder, without success, my own evil passions and habitual sins. Many arguments also I adduced from the word of God, though without a right understanding of it, and therefore no wonder those arguments were ineffectual, to overcome and convince *you* of yours. It was never my deliberate design to make a gain of godliness, nor to put on the convenient *form* of it for the sake of temporal advantages; but, ever since I took the ministry, I have always, in *some sort*, felt and believed that "godliness, with contentment, was great gain;" and that the peace of God, though still I knew nothing of it in its high import, was more to be desired than all that the world could give. I shall add, that, in regard to my more common intercourse and conversation with you, I never gave you offence, even when I was most intemperate and graceless, without subsequent sorrow, or received offence from *you* without sincere forgiveness. In the midst of ease and competence in worldly things, I have thought of pain and poverty; and though too generally engaged in vanity, and drawn along with the stream of the world, yet I had always an inward misgiving and feeling of soul, that such a course could never profit me, or come to good.

"Thus much I have thought it allowable and proper to speak of my conduct upon the whole, since I came among you, though you yourselves know very well after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. And if you are aware, as you must be, of the many deplorable imperfections in my character as a man and

a neighbour, yet I hope that my good will towards you was, upon the whole, apparent; and that, however weak and blind and variable my judgment and conduct may have been, my designs and views were directed to promote the happiness of the parish, and to support, as far as my notions and knowledge of it extended, the cause of religion and virtue."

It was in the school of affliction that his religious knowledge and character were perfected. In the year 1795, his beloved wife, the idol of his affections, was taken from him. He had deeply felt the loss of his second son, Francis, only two years before; but this fresh and overwhelming stroke tore up his earthly happiness by the roots. He lived, but so closely had his heart been bound up with her who was now gone for ever, that existence became to him a dreary blank, a profound vacuity. Fain would he have flown from himself and his own thoughts, but they haunted him with images of grief and distraction.

This affliction, according to his own deliberate judgment, found him in a state of religious ignorance; having a name to live while he was spiritually dead; approving generally of the forms and the doctrines of the church, but unacquainted with their vital end and aim,—the consecration of the heart to God. To this cause he ascribed his incapacity to exercise resignation and faith, or to derive any real comfort from the consolations of the gospel. If the great object of his clerical career had been to communicate the saving light of heavenly truth to his flock, he would now have felt that life had yet in store for him objects and employments in which even angels might delight to

participate. Duty to that flock, "plants of his hand, and children of his prayer," would, when the lenient influence of time had softened his grief, have stirred him up to exertions for their good, fraught with reflected blessings on himself. But these were not as yet his inspiring motives, and therefore the thought of his clerical obligations so far from arousing him to exertion, pressed upon him as a painful burden. Under these circumstances he could no longer endure the solitude of his house, nor the associations of his parish. He therefore made arrangements for quitting home, and trying what change of place and absence from the scene of his sorrows could effect. His sole companion on this mournful occasion was his Bible. He travelled with it from place to place; he read it seriously and diligently, convinced that it was capable of yielding him divine consolation: but for many long and wearisome months he seemed to read it ignorantly and in vain. After a twelvemonth spent in these wanderings, seeking rest and finding none, he was well nigh reduced to despair, and at length returned to his forsaken home, in almost hopeless dejection.

In what way and by what means his mind was at length enabled to throw off its burden, and to realise the blessed assurance that "God is love," will be best explained in his own language—language scarcely less impressive than that in which a St. Augustine, in the early ages of the church, depicted the not unsimilar manner in which, after protracted and severe mental conflicts, he was enabled to cast away his old prejudices, sins, and errors, and to believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of his soul. The expressive language here

referred to occurs in a letter to a friend, the latter part of which is alone in my possession; but thence it is evident that in the preceding part he had forcibly described to this friend his *former self*, as vain, worldly, and irreligious; that he had bitterly reproached himself, both as a Christian and a clergyman, for having done so little in furtherance of his own religious edification and that of his beloved and lamented wife; and that he had described, in strong terms, the very insufficient estimate which the world is apt to make of the sinfulness of such a course. He then proceeds as follows:—

“Of these things, and what I might have done to benefit the soul of one whom I thought I loved as my own soul, I have the bitterest feelings of remorse, and can hardly restrain my agonies; but God is all wise, and all-sufficient to all, and orders all things wisely; for his will is wisdom. I rest in that persuasion, and well know that Christ was able to make himself known without my concurrence. Such, dear Madam, is the picture of one who passed with the world for a respectable, nay, and with many, I believe, for an exemplary character. In this manner are the eyes of men deceived and cheated. But God, who had determined to shew mercy to one who was so peculiarly unworthy of mercy as I was and am, was preparing the instruments of an entire conversion and change of my heart and soul. Severe and sharp were the means, it is true, and such as then appeared in the shape of the deepest afflictions; but nothing less than caustics will avail, when the gangrene is far gone. *He*, who could not be prevailed upon by mercies and blessings, was touched and awakened by sufferings and punishments:—I lost my child;

I lost my wife; I had many pecuniary losses and crosses. The consequences of extreme vanity and mismanagement in my temporal affairs began to press upon me; and when, after twelve months' absence from the scene of my affliction, I returned to my parish, of which I thought I had determined to take leave for ever, I found all these recoil with inexpressible weight upon me. Left entirely to reflect on myself, and at full leisure to estimate the extent of the troubles God had brought upon me, and those he had suffered me to bring upon myself; finding myself despoiled of all I thought was essential to my comfort and happiness, and harassed and embarrassed with a thousand domestic inconveniences and difficulties, I began to look for comfort to my religious principles; but now, alas! to my unspeakable confusion, found that they were fancied principles, and that I really had cultivated none that could effectually help me. I had given myself, in the hour of careless security, credit for a faith which was too light and unsettled to bear me up in the hour of difficulty and distress, and therefore I had nothing to comfort me; I had no place to flee unto; and no man cared for my soul. In this state and condition of misery, with the Bible, one day, in my hands, (for I had daily resorted to it for consolation since my calamity, though I now seemed not to have found it) I uttered, in the bitterness of my heart, a prayer to God, that if that book were indeed the word of truth and message of salvation, he would enable me to apply to it with a simple, teachable, unbiassed mind. I offered a supplication to my Saviour Christ, that if he were indeed a Saviour, he would be at hand to save me; that he would

help my prejudices, and heal my corruptions, and remove my blindness, and make me see the wondrous things of his law; and enable me to *understand* what was there revealed; and give me strength to believe in it, and apply it to my own emergencies; for well I knew that faith in the scriptures would be a cure for all the evils I labored under, and that other cure there was and could be none. My prayer was offered under a complete sensation of my inability to help myself in the removal of them; a perfect persuasion that if God gave no comfort, I could never more have comfort either in time or eternity. Blessed be God that he heard my prayer, and turned not aside his mercy from me. I soon, nay, almost instantly, began to read the scriptures with new eyes; I almost instantly perceived that they were the true word of God. But, gracious God! what did that perception bring with it? A perception derived from that word which told me I was born in sin; a perception of a life spent in actual sin. I now more than suspected that I had been hitherto blind, and that all I had hitherto done was madness and folly. I now more than suspected I had misused every talent, and abused the long-suffering and goodness of my God, and had been adverse to him in every particular and passage of my life. The things I had hitherto looked upon as mere follies, were now felt to be the rankest sins; and I saw at once, and with the utmost clearness and precision, the sin of self-will, and self-love, and love of the world; that my whole will and mind were sinful; that from a bitter fountain sweet waters could never have flowed for one moment; and that therefore I had naturally, never done one thing that could be acceptable to God. The

dreadful consequences of remaining under the wrath of God, occurred to me with a tremendous force. I will not lengthen this account by particulars of my sufferings; but I dare say you need not now be told, that I began to understand the scheme of justification by faith alone, and that what I had never comprehended or cared about before, appeared the plainest and simplest thing in the world to me."

The pangs of remorse and anguish which the retrospect of his past life cost him, the deep convictions of sin which a spiritual application of the law of God to his conscience produced, prepared his mind to receive, with penitential faith, gratitude, and joy, the glad message of the gospel. That message, while it called upon him to *repent*, called upon him also to *believe*—to believe that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;"* that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."† All this, it is true, he must have read in public and in private again and again; but then he had read it, as multitudes do, without any close and personal application of the doctrine which it contains to their own case, and therefore he had read it without feeling. But now the arrows of conviction had fastened themselves in his conscience, he deeply felt his own sinfulness and the need and value of a Saviour, and therefore the great mystery of redemption became the subject of his joyful, thankful, and adoring contemplation. He had not a single religious friend to open his mind to. He made use of no religious book but the Bible; but

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

† John iii. 16.

it proved itself to be all-sufficient; it unfolded to him his own heart and its manifold corruptions; it set sin before him as that guilty, accursed thing, which brought the world under condemnation; it led him to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."* "Being justified by faith, he had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."† An inward calm, a heavenly repose of soul, a filial confidence, a settled hope in the mercy of God, a sense of reconciliation now quieted the tempest of his feelings. His soul became full of serenity; it rejoiced in the clear sunshine of divine love. By day, by night, this glorious subject absorbed his thoughts, and fixed his contemplation.

His convictions of sin, and the grounds of his subsequent peace of mind, accord with the whole tenor of the gospels, and with the doctrines of grace as more fully developed in the apostolical epistles. Miraculous attestations to the truth of Christianity have ceased with the occasions which called for them, but instances of its power in renovating the human heart, are of perpetual occurrence. The change of character thus produced in individuals is often so great as to strike those with wonder, who, from want of due acquaintance with the Bible, are not aware that effects such as these are in perfect accordance with the promises of God, addressed, in its sacred pages, to those who repent and believe. To know Jesus Christ as the Saviour of our souls, we must have grace to believe in him; to advance and persevere in holy obedience to his will, we must have vital union with him. The doctrines of grace are, it is true, capable of dangerous perversion; but our Saviour has furnished

* John i. 29.

† Rom. v. 1.

an infallible test, applicable to all cases of alleged conversion, "By their fruits ye shall know them; men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles."* Tried by this test, the great change of sentiment and feeling experienced by Mr. Whalley, may be safely designated as a remarkable interposition of divine mercy; for while it opened his eyes to the one only basis of a sinner's justification before God, it rendered him victorious over his habitual sins and corruptions; it imparted to him elevation of purpose, and action; it filled him with supreme love to God, and brotherly kindness to man. Henceforth a great and marked alteration was visible, not only in the tone and temper of his mind, but also in his doctrinal statements, and in his assiduous attention to his pastoral duties. The heat of his natural temper was controlled and subdued; the pride and fastidiousness of mind and manner, of which his associates had so often complained, was succeeded by humility, forbearance, and love. The contrast presented by his present and past character was so striking, that it naturally became a theme of conversation among his former acquaintances and friends; and many of them could scarcely believe that the amiable and saint-like man, whom they now viewed with reverence, was the elegant and fastidious individual who had formerly seemed scarcely accessible. The topics, and the tendency of his preaching, assumed a totally new character. As was said of Richard Baxter's addresses from the pulpit, "he spoke as a dying man to dying men." Perhaps its leading characteristics could not be better explained than by stating that it was in the spirit

* Matthew vii. 16.

of that striking passage in one of Bishop Horsley's charges, in which he exhorts his clergy as follows:—"Apply yourselves with the whole strength and power of your minds to do the work of evangelists. Proclaim to those who are at enmity with God, and children of his wrath, the glad tidings of Christ's pacification; sound the alarm to awaken to a life of righteousness a world lost and dead in trespasses and sins; lift aloft the blazing torch of revelation, to scatter its rays over them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and guide the footsteps of the benighted wanderer into the paths of life and peace."*

Mr. Whalley thus became the affectionate pastor, the enlightened teacher of his flock. He was not only prompt to render them effectual help, to the best of his ability, at the call of sickness, or poverty, or sorrow, but he made himself personally acquainted with their various characters, and as far as possible, with their religious condition. From day to day he watched over them for good; and to his exhortations and active endeavours for their improvement and happiness, he united earnest prayers to God for a special blessing on his labors.

I give the following as specimens of his "Sacra Privata;" the first of which appears to have been penned about the time just referred to.

A SACRAMENTAL PRAYER.

Lord! give me grace, a miserable sinner, to lay hold on thy mercies in Jesus Christ. Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Strengthen my faith in the sacrifice I am about to commemorate, and teach me,

* Charge to the Clergy of St. Asaph, 1806.

while I fly to it from the terrors of a wounded conscience, to make it the assured pledge of my redemption, by a renewed and sanctified conversation for the time to come. Oh! let it ever be a means and a motive with me to an effectual change of heart. Let it gradually work in me some faint resemblance of thine adorable perfections; a pious submission to thy blessed will; a patient conformity to thy most holy life; a spirit inclined and qualified to glorify God on high, and to follow peace on earth and good-will towards men. Grant, O merciful Father, that the world may be crucified to me, and I unto the world, through Him who loved me and gave himself for me, Jesus Christ the righteous. Amen.

A PRAYER, WITH PASSAGES IN IT FROM THE CONFESSIONS OF ST. AUGUSTINE, ESPECIALLY FROM BOOK X., c. 43.

O God, the true life, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, the author and fountain of all life both in the body and the soul, the common source of all good; let our faith in thee excite us to approach thee; our hope exalt our desires towards thee; our love unite us inseparably to thee.

Thou commandest us to seek thee, and art ready to be found; thou biddest us knock, and openest when we do so. To turn *from* thee is to fall into ruin and death; to turn *to* thee is to rise to life and glory; to abide *in* thee is to stand fast and secure from all dangers for ever. No man loses thee, who does not suffer himself to be deceived: no man seeks thee, who does not submit to instruction and reproof: no man finds thee, who does

not seek after thee with a clean heart and purified affections. To know thee is life: to serve thee is freedom: to enjoy thee is power: to praise thee is happiness. O give us strength to praise, and bless, and adore thee, with heart, and hand, and voice, and every faculty; to worship thee, to give thanks to thee for thy great glory, for thy great goodness, for thine innumerable and inestimable mercies, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!

What *fear*, what *reverence*, what *love*, what *thanks*, what *praise*, and *glory*, ought miserable sinners to pay to a God who hath thus pitied, and loved, and rescued them, thus sanctified, thus exalted them! The whole of our abilities, the whole of our time, our life and being itself, are thy just tribute. But what ability have we, which is not thine already, and derived from thee? Thou, therefore, from whom all good things do come, impart to us, for thine own name's sake, of thy good treasure, that of thine own gifts we may give back again to thee, and be enabled by thy grace to serve and please thee in faithfulness and truth; and render thee due and daily praise for all thy works of mercy, yea, even for the very power of rendering thee praise.

O make us sensible, Lord, and inwardly convince us, that the very power of serving thee is entirely thy gift, since every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning. And in this sense, and under these impressions, we address thee, O Father Almighty, acknowledging thy power; O Father of mercy, depending on thy goodness; O Lord incomprehensible, adoring thine infinite excellen-

cies; O maker and restorer of all things by thy Son Jesus Christ, in confidence of thy love through the Son of thy love, whom thou didst send out of thine own bosom for our salvation, to take our life, that he might give us his, and be subject unto our death and dissolution, that we might not die eternally: Man of the substance of his mother, born *in* the world; God of the substance of his Father, begotten before the worlds: the Creator and the creature; the Shepherd and the sheep; the victor and the vanquished; dead and behold he lives, *ever* liveth to make intercession for us, having given us perfect assurance that whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name, he will not fail to give it us.

Let us, therefore, by this great, and true, and only High Priest, this Bishop of souls, this good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep; this gracious Redeemer and Mediator, who sitteth at thy right hand, pleading for miserable sinners; implore thy mercy, O most tender Lover of mankind; beseeching *Thyself*, thy *Son*, thy blessed *Spirit*, to grant us grace worthily and constantly to praise thy holy name, with deep remorse and godly sorrow for our sins; with great humility and plenteous tears, with the profoundest reverence and fear, and with every demonstration of a true repentance. But being feelingly sensible that though the Spirit be willing, the flesh is weak, that the corruptible body presseth down the soul, we pray that thou wouldest stir us up, and quicken our stupidity, and so actuate and inspire this heavy lump of clay, that we may diligently attend to, and vigorously persevere in the way of thy commandments, and in the proper methods of giving thee true praise day and night. O let our spirit burn

within us, and let the holy flame burst out. As thy Son hath declared that no man cometh unto him, except he be drawn of the Father, and again, that no man cometh to the Father, but by him; draw us, we beseech thee, continually to him, that he at length may bring us to thee, even to those happy mansions, where he now sitteth at thy right hand.

Blessed are all thy saints, my God and King, who have passed the tempestuous sea of mortality, and have at length made the desired port of peace and safety, fearless of future hazards, and full of perpetual joy. This sea thou, our Saviour, didst condescend to try and be tossed upon. O cast a gracious eye upon us, who are still in the dangerous voyage.

Thou art gone up to never-fading glory, but thou wilt not in the midst of thine own happiness forget those who are beset with a vast variety of miseries. Thou hast chosen us to Thyself, and what we are or hope to be is all thy gift. Thou hast promised to make us immortal, with and by thyself, and to bestow upon us the everlasting felicity of thy presence. O remember us, and succour us in our distress, and think on them who lie exposed to the rough storms of troubles and temptations.

Thou art the gate of heaven, the door at which the sheep must enter; but we, alas! lie grovelling here below: our soul cleaveth to the dust, stretch forth thine hand and raise us up! Amen!

In the year 1800, Mr. Whalley gave up the living of Horsington to his nephew, and soon after took possession of Chelwood, a small rectory, near Pensford, in

Somersetshire, given him by his old friend and connexion, Dr. Beadon, Bishop of Bath and Wells. The population was chiefly rural, and the kindest feelings quickly sprung up between them and their pastor. The daily proofs which they received of his disinterestedness, and heartfelt zeal for their present comfort and their eternal welfare, secured to him their reverence and affection. Even those who refused to profit by his warnings, could not but appreciate his character and example. His Christian tenderness towards the youthful members of his flock was truly impressive. At a later period than that now referred to, an instance came under my own notice, in which he watched like a ministering angel at the sick couch of a young person who was dying of consumption, and to whom his ministry had been eminently useful. In the last stage of her trying illness, he even received her and one of her relatives into his own house, for change of air and better attendance; and he was finally rewarded for his great kindness, not only by her heartfelt gratitude, but by witnessing the perfect peace and joy with which, through faith in the Redeemer, she breathed her last.

He occasionally relaxed from his parochial duties to visit friends or connexions; and among the houses to which he was fond of resorting, was Barley Wood, the residence of Mrs. Hannah More and her four maiden sisters; a household which was not only illuminated by the brilliant genius of that pious, eminent, and beloved lady, but by the kindness, the hospitality, and the various talents of the other members of the sisterhood. No one admired Mr. Whalley, in his new character, more than Hannah More, or had a livelier

sense of the contrast which it presented to her early recollections of him. "A great many men," she used to say, "are *near* heaven, but Richard Whalley is *in* heaven."

The late Bishop Ryder, when Dean of Wells, made his acquaintance, and regarded him with affectionate veneration. He was also held in high esteem and regard by his diocesan, Dr. Beadon, and usually spent some days at the palace in the course of the year.

In the year 1810, a friend of Mr. Whalley's, Mr. ———, a Director of the East India Company, lost his wife, to whom he was deeply and tenderly attached. By way of alleviating his grief, he addressed a letter to his old friend, claiming his sympathy, and anxiously enquiring if he thought that he should know and recognize the lost partner of his affections in a future state of being. The question touched his feelings on a tender point; but he did not allow himself to be drawn into the discussion of it, as he had reason to think he should be more truly acting the part of a faithful Christian friend, by intreating his correspondent rather to test the validity of his own title to the heavenly inheritance, than to speculate on such a topic. Such was the sound judgment and affectionate sympathy with which he pressed this delicate point on his friend's attention, that his disappointment at not being indulged with a letter in the strain that he had expected, was forgotten, in his admiration of the wisdom and sincerity with which Mr. Whalley had addressed him. Under this impression, he transmitted the letter he had received to his friend, the late Mr. Wilberforce, who at that time represented the county of York in parliament. No one was more qualified than that truly great and good man to appreciate

the value of such a counsellor; and the letter was returned, with the following reply, which is introduced here, from its connexion with the subject of this Memoir.

To Mr. ———.

“Hermontseux, near Battel,

“July 26, 1811.

“Many thanks, my dear Sir, for your friendly communication, and for the truly Christian epistle you have entrusted to me. It is a happiness, a happiness for which I doubt not you are duly thankful, that you can call such a man your friend. Mr. Whalley’s former letter, which you were so obliging as to lend me last year, I returned, and a precious letter it was. In sending back that which I have now before me, I will add a few words which the perusal of it suggests, because they are of a sort congenial with this day’s purposes and objects.

“Your good friend, my dear Sir, truly says, that the religion which I approve and which I wish to possess, is such as he recommends to you—the religion of the Bible, of the holy apostles, of the pillars of the Church of England, and of your most excellent and venerable friend, Swartz; holiness of heart and life, produced by the operation of the Spirit of God in those who have been accepted through Christ Jesus the Redeemer; that is, having repented and believed on him, they have become sons of God, according to the expression of St. John, (ch. i. ver. 12.) ‘As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; who are born (as the next verse says,) of God;’ *i. e.* by his converting and sanctifying Spirit. This, as your

correspondent says, is what the natural man receiveth not. So St. Paul said before him, 1 Cor. 2. 'It is foolishness unto him, because it is spiritually discerned.' And wherever it really exists, there certainly is a disposition not to be conformed to this world; not, however, from gloom or austerity, or from any idea that God is pleased by our denying ourselves what would give us pleasure, and subjecting ourselves to pain, but because the true Christian finds from experience that worldly pleasures have a powerful tendency to blunt the edge of his spiritual appetite, and to diffuse a fog, if I may so express myself, through his mind, so as to cause spiritual objects to be seen less distinctly, their beauties and excellencies to be less clearly recognized, and consequently less keenly relished. The truth is, he endeavours to retain a practical impression of that astonishing promise, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.) Remembering this gracious declaration, and remembering also the apostle's injunction, twice repeated, not to "grieve," not to "quench the Spirit, he avoids not merely that which is absolutely unlawful and positively forbidden, but whatever he conceives would be unsuited to his blessed Inmate; whatever may dull or deaden, not merely whatever would extinguish the flame.

"O, my dear Sir, I talk and write of these things fluently, but how much harder is it to preserve a lively sense of them in their reality and power! and therefore how do we need all that can stimulate and quicken, rather than subject ourselves to the action of causes

which have a directly opposite effect? But surely it can scarcely be necessary for me to add, that all this inward religion is not to terminate within; but having there its seat; *there* being the living fire; thence, as from the sun, the centre of the system of our universe, will be diffused those quickening beams which are known through the world as the producers of beauty and fertility. In like manner these peculiar people are zealous of good works, and are only grieved that they cannot still more glorify their gracious Father and Redeemer, and benefit their fellow creatures. May you and I, my dear Sir, and all whom we hold most dear, experience more and more of the divine transformation of which I have been speaking. Shall I express myself in scriptural language, and say, ‘May our God fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power?’ (2 Thess. i. 11.) May we find ourselves growing in grace, that we may hereafter partake of a more abundant measure of glory. *We may*. For assuredly the nature of God and of Christ is unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And when we consider what a prize is before us, surely it might be expected that our most vigorous efforts would be called forth; but, alas! here we are apt to be lukewarm and remiss—here, where our everlasting interests are in question! Quicken us, O Lord, by thy heavenly grace, and let us not sleep as do others, but resolutely set ourselves to run, to fight, (to *agonize*, as the Greek expresses it,) so as not to run uncertainly. Above all, let us not flatter ourselves that we have attained, until this is established by clear decisive evidence.

“My dear Sir, I am persuaded I need make no

apologies for the freedom with which I have written to you. Adieu! and, as you orientalists phrase it, what can I say more?

“ Ever sincerely your’s,

“ W. WILBERFORCE.”

It was often my wish to have made the writer of this letter personally acquainted with Mr. Whalley. I well knew, from intimate friendship with both, what pleasure they would have felt in each other’s society; but the opportunity never presented itself. It may not, however, be out of place to add, that the first letter in this collection was well known to Mr. Wilberforce, and highly valued by him.

Glory, and that of the highest and purest kind, must ever accompany the name and memory of Wilberforce, as the great instrument in the hands of Providence for effecting the abolition of the slave trade; an act which prepared the way for putting down slavery throughout the British dominions, and it may confidently be hoped, is the precursor of the extinction of slavery itself. But the existing generation can hardly be aware what a storm of obloquy and reproach pursued that great philanthropist, in the early stages of his noble enterprise. May it be permitted one who had close and intimate opportunities of studying his character, both as it appeared in public, and as it clearly manifested itself in private life, to offer to his memory a brief but sincere tribute of affectionate veneration. Upon his great powers of eloquence, his undaunted moral courage, his unceasing application, his steadfast perseverance, all brought to bear through long years of trial, opposition, and discouragement, upon the final

object of his solicitude and hope—*Negro Emancipation*, it is needless to expatiate, because these are become facts of history. Equally needless is it to refer to the warm and ardent spirit of philanthropy in which he was ever ready to exert his great talents in the cause of public charity, whether directed to the temporal relief of his fellow creatures, or to their spiritual improvement and instruction, for all this is scarcely less obvious.

But to those qualities which are most revealed to the eye and observation of friendship in domestic life, I may be permitted for a moment to advert. He was one of the least reserved of human beings: his inmost thoughts upon all subjects were reflected to the minds of those who enjoyed his intimacy; and there are none such existing but would declare that his great public virtues were founded on a truly divine, because truly Christian spirit of philanthropy. This spirit pervaded his whole character. It was in the school of Christ, and by obedience to his divine precepts, that he had learnt to crucify the selfish principles of our fallen nature, and to tread, as far as is possible to mortals, the path of disinterested goodness. Amidst all his manifold and pressing engagements, "he walked with God." The devotions of the closet were his daily preparatives for the duties of public life; and therefore, whether on the floor or in the lobby of the House of Commons, or in his study at Kensington Gore, he was precisely the same. His time, fortune, and influence appeared to be almost exclusively devoted to public objects; yet all the while the stream of his private charities was flowing through innumerable channels, unseen and unknown by the world, but blessing those whom it visited. As a companion, his

wit, and fancy, and cheerfulness were inexhaustible, and his thoughts, always lively, were expressed, as they rose at the moment, with a rare felicity of language. So salient was his mind, and so fruitful of inward peace were the high principles upon which he acted, that at the age of seventy-three his spirits were light-hearted like a boy's. As a friend, he was all affection and sympathy; and as a Christian, his humility was as profound as his purpose was high and elevated. This is not mere panegyric—it is fact.

The proximity of Chelwood to Clifton and Bath, naturally enlarged the sphere of Mr. Whalley's acquaintance. In proportion as he became known, his advice and opinion were sought on points of conscience or of Christian doctrine; and such was his kindness, that he hardly knew how to decline compliance with any such application, coming to him from an attached or enquiring friend, although the consequent labor of thought and pen was often beyond his strength.

Nothing could exceed the affectionate kindness, the simple, yet cordial hospitality with which he entertained, at Chelwood, the friends whom he admitted, when his health allowed it, to his house and board. The house was small, but neat; the appendages of his table were plain, but inviting; and a due attention was paid to the little minor comforts which befit the residence of a gentleman. It always appeared to myself, when I enjoyed the privilege of spending a few days with him, that I had been admitted to converse with a sort of human angel. If there were some points of theology, of secondary moment, which we viewed through a different medium, these slight differences were perfectly

consistent with essential accordance of opinion; and such as they were, they gave frequent occasion to friendly, interesting discussion, and to my experience of the candor and kindness with which he met any thing like opposition of sentiment.

Little remains to be added to what has already been adduced in this biographical notice. Pursuing steadfastly the path of Christian duty from year to year, Mr. Whalley's life, for the sixteen years during which he occupied Chelwood, was a life of active charity, self-denial, and devotion. Ill health was his principal trial. A pulmonary disorder, often alluded to in his letters, became more oppressive and frequent in its attacks, as he advanced in life, and not seldom made him an unwilling prisoner, when he would gladly have been pursuing his pastoral duties. Occasionally it obliged him to spend the severer months of winter on the mild coast of South Devon, when Sidmouth was his usual place of resort. Yet his life was a most happy one, for he lived, as far as is conceded to man in the present imperfect state of things, in the spirit of that "perfect love which casteth out fear." A greater example of deadness to the world I never beheld. Satisfied to dwell in the seclusion of his humble parsonage, he appeared to be intent on one sole object, that of approving himself in the sight of God, and doing good to his fellow-creatures. The contentions of party, the strife of opposing interests, the bustle and the hum of busy life, approached not his peaceful and retired dwelling. He had no wishes for preferment; he had no feelings of ambition; he sought not distinction or notice. Shunning rather than seeking observation, he calmly pursued the noiseless tenor

of his way; but whenever he did come in contact with the world, no one knew better what befitted a Christian and a gentleman. So spiritual were his tastes, that I have several times heard him say, "I find far more pleasure in sitting down and conversing with the humblest old person in my parish, provided that person be a real Christian, than I should in associating with the brightest literati of the age, if devoid of genuine piety."

When I sometimes spoke to him of new publications, or of choice productions of taste or genius, he would give me to understand that he was "*homo unius libri*;" that he had renounced, from the moment of his great change of opinion, secular studies, excepting so far as they could assist him in the interpretation of the Bible, and in the practice of its sacred truths. "I have lost so much time," he would say, "in past days; the earlier years of my youth and manhood were so mispent, that I have not the claim which others possess to indulge in these elegant pursuits. I feel it to be my duty to do all the little I can to redeem lost time, and stedfastly to keep in view the grand and ultimate objects of the Christian vocation."

Mr. Whalley was cordially attached to the fundamental institutions of his native country. He was deeply sensible of the inestimable value of a free government and a reformed church, and of the debt of gratitude which this nation owes to that wonderful Providence which guarded its own shores from violation while the hurricane of war and revolution was desolating every other part of Europe. Though he meddled not with politics, he was a sound protestant, and jealous of every opinion tending to underrate the importance of

those differences which separate the Church of England from that of Rome. The doctrine of papal supremacy he regarded as a monstrous usurpation, forced upon the western church by fraud, force, and ambition, in dark and superstitious times; opposed to the facts of scripture, to reason, and to primitive præcedent. He abhorred from his heart the false miracles and lying wonders with which that church cajoles the ignorant multitude, and rivets her chains upon their consciences, and considered that she had only escaped total corruption in consequence of the vital and essential truths which are still comprehended in her creed.

The following letter, one of his last, if not the last of any length, for it was written a few weeks only before his death, will beautifully illustrate the state of his mind, and the bright hopes which cheered and sustained it on the very verge of his last illness.

To Mrs. ———.

“My dear Friend,

“Debts of gratitude should be paid, and mine to *you* have been long due, for the fruit you repeatedly sent me. But independently of this motive for writing to you, I wished to hear of your health; and yet my letter has been delayed till now. However, I trust you will, without further apology, accept this present poor offering—a *free-will offering*, I assure you, it is, though late—a real produce of the affections of the heart; and, as God himself does not despise such things, *you* will not; for I am persuaded you belong to him, and partake of his indulgent loving Spirit, ever ready to pardon, ever ready to make allowances for the weakness of the

flesh, if the spirit be willing, and the mind upright. And this, indeed, is every thing in his sight; and where *sincerity* is, there we may be sure he himself is; for it is by *his* Spirit that we obtain it; otherwise we go on deceiving ourselves and others, offering to God empty, heartless services, and paying to men many fine compliments, that have no meaning. But when we are brought to the knowledge of his love to us in Christ, we begin to have something of the *mind* that was in Christ, and then our love is without dissimulation. Such a love, my dear friend, may *we* ever cultivate while we remain here below, that we may carry it up with us to heaven, and there have it *perfected*. And should it not be our great endeavour to advance in that science and art of love, which we are to exercise for ever in another state? What is our Christian profession but a training up and previous education for the enjoyment of the great *privilege* and *patrimony* of loving God and the children of God, without any further hindrance or drawback? The heirs of great wealth, here upon earth, are still looking, till they come of age, to their estates and titles; and should not we, who have such wealth in heaven, be doing the same thing? And what is the wealth of heaven? Why, still I say LOVE. In this one word is comprehended heaven itself. To love God perfectly by the influence and power of *his* love in our souls, uniting us all in one circle of love to him and to each other through Christ, will be our one delight and desire—a desire never disappointed, as here, in some measure, our best desires are. To desire and to possess will then be the same thing. To look to God, and to be like him, will admit of no discrimi-

nation. Our very business in heaven will be love; and the services there appointed for us, will all be made up of *that*: no more differing from the principle, than the stream from the spring; and as the spring will be eternal, the stream will be eternal. Well then, my dear friend, let us be attentive to this very thing now. If the good Spirit has indeed shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, and the spring of this divine principle has burst forth in this way within us, then the stream must flow of course, and all our duties must be done in love; and let the stream be large and copious, becoming those who profess to derive it from God, who is love itself. It is true that as to God himself, he only wants our *affections*; yet he has commanded FRUITS and PROOFS of them for the sake of his creatures and people, and for our own sakes. It must still be known *whose* we are and *whom* we serve, by our services to the brethren, and streams of beneficence, as well as benevolence, should be flowing out according to our means, in honor of him who is the great Benefactor—the *Giver of all good*.

I am much as I have been, and exactly *where* I have been, in my own cottage. The summer has been adverse to me, so that I have been very little out, even in my own parish. I have been hoping to be able to go and see my children, who cannot, with their family, come to me. I have thoughts of attempting it next week, for a short time, should the weather clear up at all. I seem to want some little change and exercise before the winter sets in, and *there* I can be quite *at home* and do as I like; for, indeed, my infirmities are such that I am constrained to give up *visiting*, even among my kindest friends. And now, my very dear

friend, I bid you farewell. I recommend you to God and his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. When you lift up your heart to God, remember *me*; and believe me ever,

“Your affectionate servant,

“R. C. WHALLEY.”

Shortly after the date of this letter, the malady under which Mr. Whalley had for so many years labored, assumed a more serious aspect, and he was strongly impressed with the idea that the term of his earthly existence was fast approaching. Happily for his own comfort and for the feelings of his family, he had previously reached his son's parsonage, at Yeovilton—a son closely united to him in sentiment, heart, and affection; and from him and his daughter-in-law, to whom he was greatly attached, he received, in his closing hours, the most affectionate and tender attentions. The state of his mind was all serenity and peace, and his hopes were full of immortality. His conversation was most edifying. He joyfully anticipated the putting off his weak and worn-out body, and entering through the gate of death into the presence of that Saviour, whom his faith hailed as “the strength of his heart and his portion for ever.” He rallied so much from this seizure, about a fortnight before his death, that he began to talk of future plans, and even of returning home; but a relapse occurred, which proved too much for his enfeebled strength to sustain; and on Sunday, Nov. 17, 1816, his happy spirit was released from the burden of the flesh, and he entered into the joy of his Lord, aged sixty-eight.

LETTERS.



LETTERS.

ON COMMUNION WITH GOD, ETC.

My dear Sir,

I should have written to you much sooner, but for several circumstances that unexpectedly interfered with it, one of which was, that I was called upon to preach a sermon out of the way of my stated duty, and which I thought required more than the usual attention and pains which I am able to bestow upon what I write.

I fear I am one of those who are apt to promise more than they have ability to perform. I can seldom find it in my heart to refuse any thing to those I love; which of course brings me into many difficulties. Love perceives not these difficulties at first, and is apt to suppose itself equal to any thing to serve a dear friend; but the moment arrives when will and power are found to be distinct things; and this is now the case with me. What therefore shall I say to your enquiry concerning the daily walk and communion of a Christian with God, and the best and most effectual method of keeping it up? Shall I decline answering it altogether? That would

seem unkind, and unfaithful to my word. And therefore, dear Sir, take a few thoughts from me, such as they are, and inferior as they must be to those from a thousand other authorities, both dead and living, which you have it in your power to apply to. You must be well aware too that even had I power and capacity, gift and grace, for what you prescribe me, it would demand a treatise rather than a letter. Yet "*such as I have* (and it is all that need be said,) *give I thee.*" I may add, however, still following and using the apostle's language, though upon a perfectly different occasion, "Silver and gold have I none." Shining things I have none to produce, but plain, wholesome, strengthening truths are at your service, and I know you will not disdain them. To *know what* we want, to have a clear idea and conception of it, is certainly a necessary point towards its attainment; and thus far I am sure you want no teaching, for you have yourself very well defined it (I mean the walking with God,) as "*a seeing Him that is invisible.*"—Heb. xi. 27. It is the setting God always before us. It is a fearing before him always, as one whose eye is upon us and whose mind is towards us, and consequently in all our conversation to make his will, as expressed in his word, our constant rule, and his honor and service our sincere end and aim. Now to do this heartily and rightly, I may first observe, implies two things, a sense of his *sufficiency for us*, and *peculiar relation to us*. If we do not find him to be the object that can alone satisfy our desires and fill up our hearts, who is every thing to us, and can do every thing for us; "our shield (as his own word expresses it,) and exceeding great reward," we shall certainly not fear before him,

nor care for him in a right sense; we shall not wish to remember him in our ways in such a manner as to make them acceptable to him. And how is this sense of his sufficiency for our perfect happiness to be arrived at, but by the knowledge of him as peculiarly connected with us in a covenant relation as *our God*? Till he is brought nigh to us in this way, we may talk of his power to make us happy, but we shall have no real sense and perception of it—no such persuasion of it as will operate at all towards our *walking with Him*. Those therefore who remain at a distance from him as peculiarly engaged to be *their God*, and thus have no real discernment of his absolute sufficiency to make them blessed, are for ever turning to every vanity rather than to him. *Their* walk with God is quite out of the question. It is *God in Christ* then that we must always set before us: it is an apprehension of him as our reconciled Father, through the Son of his love; the “first-born among many brethren,” that must be the ground work of our affection for him and obedience to him, and of all that reverential familiarity with him, which is included in the idea of walking with him. For “can two walk together except they be agreed?” It certainly cannot be, but by constraint. Therefore to walk with God, to think of it or attempt it to any purpose, must suppose that we have obtained some good assurance of our being actually at peace with him; that the enmity is abolished and our sins atoned for; that reconciliation is really made for iniquity; and our justification by faith in Christ accomplished. Now all this, my dear Sir, is not, I thank God, applicable to your case. You have reason to hope that the foundation of your interest in

Christ is firm and scriptural: but it is humbling and mortifying, you say, that the feelings should remain so little duly affected. Ah! dear Sir, this is the case with us all, I believe. We are a sad contradiction to ourselves upon a thousand occasions in things not discernible by others, and particularly in this strange religious insensibility, under circumstances that might make the very stones to cry out of the exceeding love of God towards us. However, we must still be seeking for a remedy, and enquiring how this mischief may be repaired or checked, and how we may more uniformly and decidedly walk as in the presence of God. That believers themselves may walk loosely and lose much of their comfort, or if not loosely, yet with too much of a cold distance from him whom they should always be coming nigh to, is a thing that we both too well know the truth of: and how are they to be corrected in this, and attain a steady, happy, comfortable nearness to God in the whole course of their conversation in the world? Why I think, in the *first place*, it is a main thing to have an eye to, and an habitual recollection of, their great privileges as believers. They should cultivate such a recollection above all things. While these privileges are represented to our minds in their proper light and importance, and their astonishing excellence and greatness: while we perceive and are sensible of the dignity we enjoy as God's children: while we are able to recal to our minds that we are now in a high and wonderful sense sons of God, regenerated to him by a spiritual creation in Christ Jesus: brought again into his house and family by the Spirit of adoption, so as actually to be accounted his, and made the undoubted

heirs of his everlasting promises, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ: partakers of the divine nature already, and even here; in order to a perfect enjoyment of the divine presence hereafter; one with Christ, one spirit with him—members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones—in short, so incorporated with him by faith, the uniting grace, as to be acknowledged by the eternal God as his own offspring, and viewed no longer as in ourselves, but as in him, as component parts of his own dear and only-begotten Son! Surely as these things are recollected and laid to heart, we shall be proportionably careful to walk (as the apostle terms it) “*worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory.*” We shall be ashamed of sinking down again to the ordinary level even of real believers, or of ever debasing ourselves with thoughts, or designs, or desires, which may not be prosecuted in the presence of the God of holiness, and are not so prosecuted as to bring him to our minds. The heirs of such an inheritance as that we are looking to, and the children of such a Father (if the thought of these high things can once be made familiar to us,) will surely walk with God, and with none else; and as we see men of high mortal rank uneasy and dissatisfied, when they find themselves in company with low persons, the children of this immortal extraction (as far as it is habitually remembered and believed in,) will be uneasy and dissatisfied when God is not present to their thoughts, which will quickly cause them to return to him, whenever they have wandered from him. Reflecting that the acquisition of those graces and perfections, those habits and characters of soul, which are to qualify them for the enjoyment of

God hereafter, will depend upon their nearness to him here, they will continually be endeavouring to draw them from the divine fountain by keeping close to it. Reflecting that they are to sit down with Christ on his throne, even as he is set down with his Father on his throne, they will be taking the utmost care to be adorned with proper apparel for the purpose, and to appear there with suitable habiliments. Having the grandeur of their Father's court and crown in view, and considering that they are travelling here only as in a foreign country, for education and improvement in manners and knowledge, it will be their great endeavour to return to him fitted and qualified to shine in it. But if they forget all this, if they have not been careful to work it into their minds by an habitual recollection, they will walk (at least occasionally,) as other people walk, they will walk with the world and with God alternately; they will have alternate dejections and elevations, they will have a tremulous hesitating faith, and a varied inconsistent practice; and if God acknowledge them occasionally, he will not shine upon them with a steady light, nor will they get with a *πληροφορία*, a full assurance of faith, to heaven. But in the *second place*, it will be allowed by the best of us that there is a fund of vanity in our hearts; a bundle of folly in the hearts of such weak children as we are; and that our high privileges and astonishing exaltation as heirs of the covenant of grace, our translation from the dust to sit with the princes of *God's people*, might well turn our heads and make us giddy, if there were not something else taken into the account to counteract it, something of a nature to lower our crest, and obviate the danger

of our becoming vain and inflated by an habitual contemplation of the glory put upon us. Without some such thing we cannot be secured in our walk with God; we cannot *walk humbly with him*. And here behold the goodness and wisdom of God, in connecting our *regeneration and adoption* to be his children with a state of humiliation and abasement as brought to him through a crucified Saviour, as restored and recovered to him by the blood of the cross, as recommended to him not by any merits of our own, but by the sorrows, sufferings, and humiliations of the Redeemer. Here there is enough, one would think, to hide pride from us, and to exclude boasting, and it was so expressly intended. If we turn our eyes this way, a *mortified humility* will be blended with a *sense of dignity*, and we shall be kept in an even and straight path. The Lord of life and glory stretched upon a cross and bathed in his own blood, and deserted (as to his own sense and feeling of it,) by God as well as man for our sins, will be a sure pledge to us, if we can succeed in keeping it in view, that the eminence upon which he has placed us shall not intoxicate our heads or hearts. Connecting it, as we must do, with the sad condition we were in, and the irremediable guilt and degradation that would cleave to us but for this sacrifice, and considering that we are only justified and sanctified too in him, we cannot start away from God on the side of arrogance or vanity, any more than in the other case on the side of baseness and low behaviour. While engaged in the humble services among our fellow-creatures which our profession obliges us to, we shall still remember the *crown*, and while employed in the high praises of God and the elevating

duties of our religion, we shall still remember the *cross*, and either way God will not be far from us. The thing I would here urge is illustrated by what happened to St. Paul. We should soon be exalted above measure at the abundance of the things revealed to us and brought within our view and reach, if it were not for this constant "thorn in our flesh," this wounding of our pride by the consideration of our having nothing to glory in save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus then the matter stands. The privileges and dignities we already possess and further look to must never be long from our thoughts, but never there alone. The sorrows, sufferings, and humiliations which the Redeemer submitted to, to purchase them for us, must accompany them there, and who and what that glorious Person was must be well remembered also. The *first thing* considerable towards our walking with God is a ready recollection of our great privileges as believers; the *second thing* considerable is a ready recollection of the way by which they were purchased for us. Both together will put us into that mixed and paradoxical state of rejoicing and broken-heartedness at the same time, which seems necessary to a close and holy walk with God. In the *third place*, however, we must understand that God does not usually act upon us by immediate impulses, but through means, and that therefore we must *cultivate* the means by which an elevating sense of our high privileges in Christ Jesus, and an humbling sense of the way in which they were obtained for us, is to be secured and improved. And here, as every where else, but here especially, ought we to adore the deep wisdom of God, in making these means so simple and yet so effectual,

so little burdensome and yet so weighty. For instance, the sacraments ordained by Christ in his church. What a simple thing is baptism, and yet what lively notions does it help us to of those very privileges I have been speaking of, and how is the recollection of it calculated to imprint them upon our minds! The gift of the Spirit and all its blessed influences is here represented to us, and our adoption into the mystical body, and true body and church of Christ is plainly figured by this ceremony of admission into his outward and visible church; and till this blessed sacrament shall be dropt and lost in the world, the proper idea of Christ's religion, and what it proposes to do for us, and what manner of persons we who profess it ought to be, can never be lost. Thus says our office of baptism, "*That it represents to us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour, and to be made like unto him,*" &c. But there is more than this in it: there is more of efficacy than consists in the ostensible outward and public use of the sacrament, and in our calling the meaning and drift of it to our minds, for God has not only made it a symbol of true and pure religion, but a channel and vehicle of grace and holiness. The thing itself as well as the idea of it is communicated; not necessarily, as the Romanists say, and as if it operated by an inherent virtue and power, but yet a power there is suited to the nature of it, and such as the great Author of it knows how to make effectual to those to whom it is rightly administered, and by whom it is rightly received. "*It is neither an empty sign (as Archbishop Leighton expresses it,) to them that believe, nor a cause of effectual grace to them that believe not:* and so of the other

sacrament, emphatically called *the sacrament*." Now with respect to this I would observe, that as the first initiatory sacrament has an evident tendency to make us remember our high calling, and to walk erect and with dignity as Christians, so this has a more immediate tendency to humble us, and counteract the vanity that these high things might infuse into our minds. Here we have represented to us the scene that passed on Mount Calvary, the astonishing transaction exhibited there *for us men and for our salvation*, and while this is continued in the world, the notion of an atonement cannot be lost in it, and the mortifying sense of unworthiness that is essential to real Christianity, will be kept alive in the faithful. Whenever they celebrate this, whenever they think of it, they will taste the bitterness of sin; they will recollect the wormwood and the gall of their first convictions; they will find in the hyssop and vinegar a most humiliating draught; and every part of the apparatus of that crucifixion, and every circumstance attending it will help to crucify and mortify them. Now what wisdom, what goodness is there in these most simple provisions made by Christ for keeping us right and steady in our holy profession, for securing us in our walk with God on either side, by making us equally aware of the depth from which he has taken us, and the elevation to which he has raised us! And what shall we say of the means that are further afforded us for these happy ends in the constant preaching of the word of grace, and the use of other religious and holy duties? The preaching of the gospel is indeed usually the very beginning of life in the soul, and lays that foundation for us, in our conversion and reconcilia-

tion to God, which I observed at setting out was absolutely essential to our desires and endeavours to walk with him. But this life is kept up and matured by the same means, by which it is first generated, and they who partake most of these means (being once born to God,) will, I should think, be best prepared to converse and walk with him, be most habitually sensible of the privilege of calling him Father, and therefore less likely to forget and dishonor him in their conduct, and most habitually confounded and abased all the while, (steering clear of pride and arrogance of every sort,) considering how far they were from him, till Christ brought them nigh by his cross. But the more private use of the word of God is a considerable matter. The reading and meditating upon it, and consulting and studying such books as explain and apply it, must have the effect of imbuing the mind and heart with spiritual thoughts and feelings, and bringing God nigh to us in lively apprehensions of his presence, and I need not say *that* presence, when it is lively and constant, will be the best preservative against temptations of every kind, against all sin and folly; for who ever turned again to folly when God was thus nigh to him, and he perceived that he stood as it were before God? Neither need I say that a sense of God's presence will make us diligent and active to please him, and do such work as he has set us. When the Master who employs is upon the spot with us, or the Prince to whom we owe allegiance does actually stand by to see what we do for him, I mean when we *perceive* him near us, how are we animated and how quick our dispatch! But these reflections are not immediately to the purpose, and therefore I check them.

Towards our walking with God then I have submitted to you three things—An habitual recollection of our high calling as his very children—an habitual recollection of the astonishing way by which we have been thus adopted to him—and an habitual use of the means of keeping such recollection alive in us. But I am aware, you will say, that these things are rather the very substance of what we are enquiring about, than a mere method of getting at it. Still it remains a question how these habits are to be wrought in us. How are we thus to remember whose we are and whom we serve? How are we thus constantly to bear in mind that the Lord Jesus made himself a servant for us? How are we to have the constant mind and determination to draw nigh to God in all the *means* of recollecting him? The world with all its tinsel will be dazzling and debauching us, the devil with all his *chicaneries* will be practising against us, and our flesh and nature will be continually giving way to solicitations and proposals so congenial to a secret corruption there. What is there, it may be asked, to be further done, or rather first done, to lead to this? *Pray without ceasing*, to draw down the graces and gifts of the Spirit into the soul, *and then go forth and practise them*, that you may *know* you have God near you; *for God meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember him in their ways*. If we consider that prayer is an actual approach to God in a way of holy familiarity, to consult with him about our souls, and carry on a business of infinite importance with him; a way in which we seek him for that purpose with all the accelerated motions that his own grace can inspire us with; if we consider that we

are drawn by his own blessed Spirit in the exercise of prayer, and furnished with arguments and filled with fervent desires, "the Spirit itself making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;" if we consider by whom we are taken in hand and introduced into the holy presence in prayer, and whose blood we plead, as well as whose Spirit it is that enables us to plead it, we must perceive, I think, how much our conversation and habitual walk with God must depend upon prayer, and that they who are most frequent and most fervent in the exercise of it will be most nigh to God, and the greatest proficient in walking with him. If the truth be, as it certainly is, that the highest and closest act of communion with God is by prayer, and that all the graces of the Spirit are strengthened and increased by it: if we look upon the Father as it were in this manner through Christ, the more we thus look upon him the more we shall remember him we so looked upon, the more we shall carry away with us into our commonest employments his blessed image, the more will every thing we see and do bear some impression of it, the more will the taste and relish of his grace and goodness remain upon our palates, till we come to that feast of prayer again, which will make all those things insipid and uninteresting to us that would otherwise have drawn us aside from him. But now if we have this grace abundant in us through prayer, if the face of God shines upon us in it, and the taste of his love be prevalent, then let us go forth and make this derived and communicated light shine before men. Then let us make this love of his to us the model and the means of our love to others, of such a love as delights in doing good, and rejoices in

the endeavour to diffuse joy and gladness around us, and especially the joy and peace that belong to right religion. But indeed every act of charity that is done upon the principle of God's love to us, must necessarily keep him nigh us, and make him present with us. We must be up and doing for God, we must work and labour in this way, if we would have him come to us and encourage us, and make us glad with his countenance, and give us cordials of refreshment. As I said before that the Master's presence will animate the servants in their work, so the servants who work well and diligently, may expect that their Master will have a pleasure in being with them. When the pleasure of the Lord prospers in their hands, and he sees his designs accomplishing, it is not likely he should be long absent from them. At least my experience warrants me in saying this. When I labour most (though little is my labour at the best,) I feel God nigh unto me; when I remember him in his ways, he seems to remember me; when I rejoice to do his work, he meets me in it; when I am sluggish, "I find him not on the right hand, and on the left he hideth himself that I cannot see him;" but in the humblest and commonest work I see him most, when it is offered to him. I therefore think (for I am sure it is time I should release you,) that the sure way of *setting God before us and of seeing him that would otherwise be invisible*, through an habitual sense of the high honor of belonging to him, and a constantly accompanying and humbling sense of the sufferings of him under whom we claim this honor, and the glad and grateful use of the means of exciting in us these apparently opposite sensations, is to fill ourselves with grace

by prayer, to draw down those supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which may stir us to go about doing good as he did, and to carry into *use and practice* what we have received. If we do not find God nigh to us this way, it would be a contradiction to all the promises he has given us and all the precepts he has set before us, and one might well conclude that there is no such thing as *walking with him*.

Among other helps it might have been added, that an habitual remembrance of our mortality and that we are *dying creatures*, would keep us as it were in the presence of God, and that to have *him* in our hearts and thoughts it is of course necessary to exclude as much as possible all such vain and worldly things, and all such vain and worldly persons as his Spirit would be offended with. And I conclude, as I began, that none of these things, or any other, can be of use to those who know not how to use *Jesus Christ*; without whom it is not only folly but impious infidelity to think of approaching God, or praying to him, or knowing any thing of him, or doing any thing for him.

And now, my dear Sir, if you do not find what I have said at all satisfactory, be assured you need not fear to own it, or to point out any thing you think wrong or unintelligible in it. I fear it may bear evidence of the suffering state in which my head has long been, owing to the continuance of wet unsettled weather; and I have been obliged to write it at intervals, having had abundance of other writing to perform.

I am, &c. &c.

Chelwood, July, 1809.

My dear Sir,

I hope it will not appear like making myself of too much consequence, if I suppose it may be a satisfaction to you to hear that I am, by God's mercy, tolerably well, and quietly *settled* again in my retirement, after the rather more than usual exertions of the last week. To *me* I am sure it is a pleasure and satisfaction to express to you and your whole family, my sense of the great kindness I met with at your house, and what a real comfort I had in the religious conversation allowed me there, as well as in the adjoining residences of your friends. I look upon these things as great blessings from God. I desire humbly to acknowledge them, looking up through the creature, who is the favoured instrument and vehicle of them, to the Creator, God blessed for ever. It is not always with a frame so weak as mine, I am able to bear much company, or be much at my ease among strangers; but indeed I found no strangers at ———, all were ready to shew me that I was among friends; and it pleased God to give me a correspondent feeling of my happiness and the privilege I was enjoying, and at the same time animal spirits for the full enjoyment of it. Thus I reckon the day I spent at ——— one of the pleasantest of my life; and that, as you well know, not in the sense of mere amusement and sensual gratification, but of intellectual, of spiritual pleasure, such as we shall enjoy the full harvest of, after these first fruits, when it shall please God to remove all impediments to it, that arise from our mixed and limited condition here. To dwell upon

this great subject together, is the duty as well as privilege of Christians. To be telling of what God has done for them, and what they humbly and firmly expect he will do; to be shewing forth his praises who hath called them out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan to God; to be strengthening each other's hands and hearts, and succouring and comforting one another, as God gives the ability; the strong supporting the weak, and bearing their burdens, and the weak giving exercise to the charity of the strong, and imparting good while they receive it, and all constantly and with delight acknowledging, that their help cometh of the Lord, and that their hope and strength is alone in Him—this is at once the duty and the happiness of true Christians, and thus only can we get through this preparatory state with ease and comfort, and good hope through grace of a final rest in heaven. Oh, Sir! what a family of love will that be above, where there shall be no evil passions, no competitions of any sort, but how to magnify the grace of God in collecting such a family together, and the exceeding love of Christ in the redemption of them by his blood; all in one chorus, without one dissentient or jarring voice, giving glory and honour and blessing, and ascribing power and salvation to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever. Surely if we do expect to join this happy company and great multitude, (great in itself, though comparatively small, when we consider the number of proud unhumiliated souls,) we should be careful to cultivate faith and love, and to seek for them upon sound principles—that is, to rely upon and look to *Him* in our acts of faith, who undertook to restore

that love between God and man which sin and guilt had so effectually broken off, and to pray to him constantly for that spirit of love whereby we may know that our reconciliation is indeed made, whereby we may be assured that we love God above all things, and that we walk in love as his dear children. To love one another in this right way, and with a pure heart fervently, is the highest social happiness we can know upon earth, and an entirely different thing from any mere natural affection; and I pray God we may daily be persuaded and experience more and more of the truth of all this. I need not add how ready I shall be, upon any occasion that Providence may offer me, to prove to any of the dear friends I met the other day, that I am not an entire stranger to this love, though sadly weak and infirm in it; and what a pleasure it would give me to wait upon any of them here, if they could put up (as I know they could,) with my humble and straitened accommodations. I beg you to present my undissembled and affectionate respects to them all.

I am, &c.

DEATH THE "GATE OF LIFE" TO A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

Sidmouth, January 17, 1810.

My dear _____,

It is highly gratifying to me to hear that you experience abiding benefit from your compliance with the dictates of a right judgment. Without confining and binding the grace of God within particular limits and to particular means, (even those of his own ap-

pointing,) it may still be justly concluded that they who in the most simple, humble, and direct manner obey his holy word in all things, as well of positive institution as of moral obligation, will be most likely to enjoy the comforts of his Holy Spirit, and have the largest portion of his real inward sanctifying power in their souls. May all of every denomination who name the name of Christ with sincerity, and bow to him as Lord and Saviour with their whole hearts, know more and more of his grace and love, and increase daily in that spiritual strength without which every thing else is but weakness and poverty. May dear ——— (as I doubt not he will be,) be made strong in the Lord and the power of his might, to endure patiently and peacefully, if not joyfully, the burden of ill health laid upon him. The apostle calls our afflictions here in the body light things, enduring but a moment, when compared to the weight of eternal glory they are sent to prepare us for. We will suppose that this dear young man is not to recover, (though let us still hope it,) and must therefore give up the thought of an honorable, useful, exemplary, Christian life here below; must renounce the opening prospect of a delightful intercourse with Christian friends, and especially those of his own family and more immediate connections, and "*behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world;*" but let him consider the blessed inhabitants of that other world to which God calls him; let him consider the Church above; the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant standing ready to receive and acknowledge him, as washed in his own precious

blood, and clothed in his own white robe, and the palm of victory in his hand, (that victory which overcometh the world, even his faith,) and then what is there but the weakness of his faith that can make the thought of lingering here as a stranger and pilgrim still welcome to him? O let us pray for him, and let him pray for us, that the faith of us all may be strengthened, so that we may yield ourselves peaceably and in perfect confidence into the Lord's hands, whether for life or death, and so live and so die as to meet together in the holy city above, to be *divided, tempted, troubled* no more. Let him consider too (and do you also consider it, my dear friend, for you are young,) that he cannot yet have made a right estimate of the world; he must have supposed in it satisfactions which it does not under any, even the most favorable circumstances, contain. Every thing here below has vanity stamped upon it. It is a wise and just appointment of God, thus frowning upon a fallen race; and even shewing to his own reinstated and redeemed children that they must through much tribulation pass on to a better state of things, and patiently bear the crookedness of the present scene and the perverseness of the present generation of men, till God shall make all straight and right and smooth for them in the eternal unchangeable world and kingdom above. We need only look at communities, families, and individuals a little *attentively*, to make a better estimate of human nature and human happiness than even good persons are sometimes apt to make. Let us view the evils that men inflict upon themselves as well as upon one another, the distracting cares and mischievous and vile tempers they are beset and overtaken by, and the

many infirmities and afflicting diseases of the body they are subject to; and all these things increasing with our years, (unless, indeed, through grace well cultivated, we get above those of them that concern the mind,) and we shall surely, I think, in the view of all this, be weaned from any *strong* attachment to such a condition of things, or fond expectations from it. This, indeed, is the very wisdom of God in bringing us to this good frame of heart, out of a state in itself so evil and miserable; and therefore all our troubles and trials here are overpaid with profit, as Bishop Horne says, if they render us sensible that we are abroad and not at home, if they make us sigh to *be* at home, and if they work in us an habitual devotion to that blessed God who alone can satisfy the soul, and is preparing for those that love him such things as pass man's understanding. Now if your dear Brother is in a way to be taken to the fruition of these things in truth; and to enjoy the vision of God, before ourselves; let him pity and pray for us poor souls who remain behind in the body and still upon our trial; while we (so long as he is with us,) will be earnest in prayer for him, that his faith and love may be invigorated and increased, and his views of that within the veil be clearer and more abundantly satisfying. Give my love to him, and assure him of my constant remembrances at the mercy seat and throne of grace.

I conclude with a word about myself. I have been very ill, and this is the first letter I have written for several weeks. I grew worse and worse from the time of my arrival, and at length was obliged to call in medical aid, and have gone through a course of discipline which has relieved me. I have been enabled to

commit all to God, and he has graciously shown me by the most comfortable manifestations, that he hath not left or forsaken me. But you may suppose that in such a state of health I have been useless, and incapable of applying to any thing.

I am, &c.

To the Rev. ———

Hensbridge, July 16, 1810.

My dear Sir,

I have seen your marriage in the papers, and had heard before from our friend Mr. ——— when it was to take place; and I must not let you suppose by my silence that I can be indifferent to any thing that concerns your happiness. In fact I have prayed, and do pray most sincerely, that all happiness may result to you from it. Do not, however, forget that the happiness we look to in the possession of any object of natural affection soon passes away; not so *that* which results from spiritual affections when we are brought together under *their* influence. They stamp an abiding dignity, beauty, and value upon the object of our choice. They are a glass that presents it to us according to its intrinsic excellence, and stripped of those perishable appendages that the common natural eye is wholly taken up with. May you, my dear Friend, have found in the companion you have chosen for life both outward and inward graces and accomplishments; that when those shall fade and deaden, these may be still fresh, and lively, and satisfying; and what is of incalculable consequence in your situation, be not only a help but a spur to you in all

those labors and self-denying duties that you are entering upon among the souls committed to you. For these duties I pray God, through Christ, to strengthen you, and to set before you the proper motives to them with an increasing light and power. Take an honest survey for yourself of what they really are, and what will be necessary to be submitted to, not only by yourself, but your dear companion, in order to fulfil them; and then resolve upon treading that strait way *at all events*. If you set out rightly and cordially together here all will go well; your days upon earth will be happy days, and in heaven you shall never cease to reap the fruit of them. But if vanity and the world be suffered to dictate to you in your plans of life at first, your latter end will not be peaceful. Pray be assured by one who has made the experiment, that the world and God can never be reconciled. I have found in making that attempt that I still had too much religion to please the world, and too little to please God. But do not, my dear Friend, mistake me, as if I were a friend to austerity or to mere unmeaning singularity, or an advocate for any thing that might bring just blame upon us, as if our love to God destroyed our social or relative affections. No, God forbid! I would give no handle to those who are disposed to accuse falsely our good conversation in Christ. I would give as little occasion as possible to those who seek occasion. But after all, be it recollected, that we cannot take away this disposition to blame us in the matter of love and charity, but by receding from the exercise of them in their higher and more important offices, and substituting mere complaisance for sterling and Christian duties. We must therefore look up to God for a right

judgment in these difficulties, and pray for strength to commit our ways to him, who can alone establish our thoughts and direct our path, and preserve us in that estimation that may be necessary to carrying on his service.

I have thus, my dear Sir, with great freedom spoken to you as to a dear brother in the ministry of the gospel; and perhaps the more so as I know not whether I may ever again have an opportunity of a more extended and personal conversation with you, for my health seems to be declining fast, and even should I be recruited so as to continue any time longer in the world, it will not probably be in such circumstances as to permit me to keep up any regular communication or intercourse with my Christian friends, with whom alone I wish to continue it. But there is a communion of saints to which we belong; and whatever our personal hindrances may be, we cannot be prevented from coming together spiritually in Christ our blessed Head, and praying in behalf of each other, for all such blessings and helps both for body and soul through him, as the all-wise and gracious God shall see to be fit for us. We ourselves see and know nothing but as he gives us light, and if we could but quietly and confidently yield ourselves to his influence and tender care, every thing would go well with us. That this may be the happy case with you, my dear Friend, and that together with her whom you have taken for your partner in this world, you may so increase in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as to be associates in the glory of the eternal world, is the most unfeigned prayer of

Your affectionate Friend and Servant.

TO A LADY SUFFERING UNDER ILL HEALTH AND
RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION.

Chelwood, 1811.

My dear Madam,

Ever since I saw you so ill you have been in my thoughts, and certainly in my prayers, and I have longed to express myself to you with pen and ink, and really was about to do it, when I found you beforehand with me by your own kind letter, which I did not receive till now, though written so far back as the end of November. * * * * *

I agree with you that there must be a *feeling of discontent* in the soul, when *it perceives itself removed from the source of good*, that is from God. You say you are conscious of this discontent, though you want to be more affected by it. It is misery indeed to be at a distance from God, or to seem to be so. Yet, my dear Madam, consider what a blessed provision there is for bringing us nigh and restoring us to that love we had all lost; for reinstating us perfectly as reconciled children to our heavenly Father, and take, I beseech you, the benefit of that provision. Do not draw back from it under a sense of pollution and unfitness, for you know that in Christ Jesus pardon, sanctification, and every thing that we want is laid up for us. In him it is to be found, and not in ourselves, and taking hold of him by an act of faith, we *have* it; we have it *completely* in him, but in ourselves very imperfectly at the best. An inward personal sanctification we must have by the Spirit of God, to make us meet for God, and dispose and empower us for a holy, exemplary life; but we must always take

into the account that we are still in a body of flesh, that there is a fleshly principle at variance with the spiritual principle in the truest Christians, and that we can neither *do* the things that we would, nor *will* them with a clear unclouded mind, and in the manner we wish. Therefore the best of us are constrained to groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body, and for a complete deliverance from the motions of sin. We ought not to let our imaginations range too high, as to the state to be attained to here below, but rather bless God that we have arrived at *desires* after holiness, and humbly trust him that he has not given us such desires for no happy end, but that he will assuredly bring them (as he has declared he will) to good effect.

All this I say as sound scriptural truth, without any undue wish to persuade you that you are further advanced in faith and holiness than you are. The comforts of religion you evidently have not, but I will continue to hope by God's mercy that you shall have them. Peace with God should be sought for simply by faith in Christ, which is the alone principle of acceptance, and is the instrument of justifying our persons, in order to their sanctification. *Then* comes a grateful dedication of ourselves to God from a sense of the great mercy shewn us, and a holy growing desire to fulfil all righteousness. Now they who set about being holy and devoted to God without being at all clear as to their being upon the right foundation, which is *Jesus Christ himself*, "rooted and grounded in *him*," must necessarily be bewildered in their endeavours, and will scarcely attain solid comfort or satisfaction; while they who see

the right *order* of things, and seek for Christ *primarily*, and to be found in him by *faith*, not having (that is, not depending upon,) their own righteousness, but his, will have their way cleared before them, and go on in it rejoicing. Thus it is that he is called the *Way*, and thus it is justly asserted that whoever will come to God, must come *by him*. And that your "heart feels cold and devoid of love to God," may have arisen from the same cause, your not taking the "*Son of his love*" primarily into the account, in whom alone he can look upon us well pleased. And if God's love be not shed abroad in our hearts this way, in consequence of experienced peace with God through Christ, (the way in which St. Paul traces it, Rom. v. 1—5.) there will be danger of mistaking the effusions of our own spirit for those of the Holy Ghost; for it is the direct office of the Holy Spirit to *bring* this love into the heart, and according to scripture always in connection with faith in Jesus, and a sense of reconciliation with God through him. I say according to the *scripture*, this is the connection; but I presume not to limit God, and can conceive that he *may* communicate sanctification and genuine love to himself in a more immediate way, and by a departure from his own general rules; but I do not think that we ought to seek for it in any other way but the plainly written and revealed one. The truth seems to be, that love between God and man was interrupted and cut off by the sin of man at the fall, was lost upon *earth*, and retired to the bosom of God as its only proper source and fountain, where it must have remained as an essential attribute, but ineffective towards *us* ruined creatures, had not Jesus Christ undertaken to restore it. *He* made himself the

way, by which God loved the world again, and brought about that peace and reconciliation, on which alone love could be founded. He is therefore styled "*our peace*;" and when we can *believe* that he is all-sufficient to make that peace for us, and *do* trust our souls to him as a Saviour, renouncing all other dependencies, and holding fast to God's immutable promise to receive and pardon us in that manner freely, then we have the warrant of his word to assure us that we *are* certainly pardoned. The Holy Ghost is the author of such a simple *humble* faith, (for it is connected always with genuine self-abasement,) and therefore sanctification of the Spirit will be inseparable from *belief of the truth*. (2 Thess. ii. 13.) I say all this, if perhaps it may be useful in clearing your mind upon the subject, though it does not appear by your letter that you are at all unaware of the nature or value of faith in Christ, or of that renewal of heart connected with it, which stamps us the children of God. You disclaim this happy relation, because, you say, "*you have never yet been able to cast yourself upon his mercies in Christ Jesus for pardon, sanctification, and every blessing*." You have expressed yourself with admirable clearness here; and I would ask you, dear Madam, what can be the meaning of such a disability? and why are you thus kept back from Jesus Christ? He offers himself to all penitent sinners, and is the complete remedy which they want; and of this, by what you say in your letter, you are aware. The remedy then is your's, dear Madam, if you will but stretch forth the hand of faith to *take* it. As a minister of Christ I am commissioned to offer it, and do now most earnestly intreat you to accept of life and peace in

Jesus Christ. Take him, in short, whom you cannot be so willing to *have*, as he is to *give* himself. Your *sins*, your *apathy*, your *deadness* of heart *he* can do away, and they cannot be done away, if we listen to scripture testimony, unless you so take him. Do not imagine that you are in an unprepared state for approaching him, or say, first let me be sanctified; but draw nigh by faith to be *made* fit, and to find all sanctifying grace and power in *him*. Do not say, how can this be? and suffer your mind and thoughts to run out in vain speculations, and curious enquiries about it. *Put by* a lively imagination and a *habit of reasoning*, as if you could work it out that way; but let faith have its perfect work, which is always in the *simplest* way. Lay hold directly, as a poor unlettered person would do, on the promises of God in Christ; and believe that your sins shall be pardoned, and the Spirit obtained through his name and merits. But if now on the other hand, my dear Madam, you *can* suppose that you *have* faith, and yet find none of the comforts of it, (and *I* believe you have it, though weak,) then get it into exercise in the above way. As to your deadness of feeling, you ought to make allowances for an extremely weak state of body. There is no saying how far the humblest and most advanced Christian may at times be dejected, and obstructed in his sensations of *peace*, and *love*, and *hope*, and *trust*, by a morbid condition of the fluids in sickness. But let not even this discourage you, for whether in *darkness or light*, you are directed to "*stay yourself upon God*," which is a proof that a darkened soul may be a believing soul.

I have tired you, I fear, through my earnest desire

to serve you; and I have not written my letter in that quiet abstraction from every thing and every person else, which I could have wished. I pray God, nevertheless, to make it helpful to you. His strength is made known in the weakness of his ministers; he condescends to act by means, though he wants them not. May his blessing and grace, my dear Madam, find you out! May his truth be powerfully revealed to you, and his Spirit abundantly comfort you! May your mourning (which I protest to you causes to me mourning and sorrow of heart,) be turned into joy, and the garments of praise be put upon you in exchange for the spirit of heaviness! One word more, and I commit you to God. Should you find yourself in a state and circumstances to have any pressing desire for help and consolation, or at least *hope* of it, from a personal attendance upon you by any servant of Christ, and could meet with nobody welcome to you where you are, I would, if God continued to me such strength as I now feel, most readily take a journey to see you.* O may God still give you to your friends, and return you to them! but a still more material prayer is, that he would give and espouse you to himself, and make you comfortably assured of his love towards you! and this, dear Madam, is the concluding petition of

Your affectionate, grateful, faithful servant.

* It was Christian love which prompted this offer. The invalid lady, to whom it was addressed, was at this time nearly eighty miles distant, and it was winter.

Chelwood, April, 8, —.

My dear ———,

It was a real concern to me to hear of your severe illness. How soon are we put in jeopardy; we may all say as David said to Jonathan, "As the Lord liveth, there is but a step between us and death." And yet how unconcerned are the most of men in this precarious state; and how far from providing against the worst and turning it into the best, by serious preparation for it, and an habitual contemplation of it. You and I, I trust, do not entirely forget that we are mortal. It were the greatest of shames if *I* did, who have hardly any thing else to attend to in this retirement, and weakness and age putting me so feelingly in mind of it. Such attacks as yours was, do soon perform their errand when they are sent to remove us; but I pray God I may hear that this was only a memento, and I sincerely believe you will not fail to profit by it. Nay, let me pray that I also may profit by it in the way of a readiness to yield up every thing, however dear, at God's bidding. When I myself am taken away, I rely upon infinite goodness for making all *that* smooth at least, if not delightful and joyful; but from a recent instance I have reason to think that the death of any dear friend would affect me more than my own. According to my present feelings I could but ill spare you or others of my dear Friends, though probably my future intercourse with them will be very slender, if any at all; yet still the existence upon earth of any object of our affections, is in itself consoling. We *may* see them; we *do* hear of them; they are not put absolutely beyond our

reach. But when they have passed that "bourn from whence no traveller returns," we can only say, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." And well is it when we can say so in *faith*—when we have a happy assurance of our own state, and a good hope of the state of the departed soul. Should it not then be *the* great business with us to obtain such an assurance, to rivet the truths of the gospel in our minds, and to make our calling and election sure, by the only possible way of doing it—"our *works of faith*, our *labors of love*, our *patience of hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ;" by treading upon the world's ground with caution, and getting more above and out of the world?

Give my sincere love to your mother, whose sorrows I hope are assuaged by this time, if not quenched, in the consolations God gives to his mourners, and the bright futurities he opens to the eye of faith. I am very thankful to be as I am as to health, though upon the whole not so well as awhile back. I know not how it is, but spring weather, however fine, always affects me unfavorably. I dare not venture much out in it, though I *have* been out repeatedly into my garden, and for a mile once or twice on horseback.

I am, &c.

To Mrs. _____

Chelwood, March, 1813.

My dear Madam,

When I consider how much time has elapsed without my taking notice of your great kindness in

writing to me, especially as it was to inquire after my health, I am ashamed of myself. It is all I shall say, though indeed, with respect to writing, my weak nerves too often refuse to obey the suggestions of the heart, and force me to throw myself upon the charity of my friends. This, be assured of, dear Madam, (and let it serve for a general plea by anticipation, should Providence preserve me to hold a further correspondence with you) that I cannot be unmindful of you, and that whatever I omit in letters shall be supplied by prayers, that is, if the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ should be graciously continued to me. What is it that has stamped such a value upon the expressions of your friendship and regard in the letter you have favoured me with? Is it not that the good Spirit of God breathes in it? that the same Teacher hath taken us both in hand, and is instructing us in that blessed principle of affection which will abide for ever; which unites all that are Christ's to him and to each other; and which, after they have made a certain proficiency in it here, will be carried on and perfected in eternity? I am not more certain of any thing, my dear Madam, from all that I saw of you here, and all that I have now heard from you, than that you have sincerely put yourself into the school of Jesus Christ; and what have you further to do, but submit to all the rules of it, and aspire to all the honors of it? But you know that the course of teaching in this school is not a little different from that in our worldly schools, where the highest form is the way to the highest privileges. Whereas here we advance *downward*, and they that take the lowest room are the chief scholars. "*Friend, go up higher,*" we shall hear in time, or rather

when time is no more to us, if we can have patience in working out our salvation, and yielding to his discipline for a season who made himself of no reputation for our sakes. But how little, after all, does he exact from us? Nothing but the renunciation of what would make us miserable even here below—sin and vanity. O! how gracious is our Master and Lord! how tender in all his dealings with us; how compassionate to our infirmities; how mindful of our wants; how accordant to our moderate and reasonable desires; and how placably attentive to our prayers. What good thing is there that he hath not reserved for us, nay, given us in present hand; and what pledge and security can we think of, which we do not possess, that all his promises shall finally be *more* than made good to us? Let us then *trust* him, my dear Friend. Let us *firmly* believe that he is *ours*, that he hath given himself for *us*. Let us continually look into the great charter of all our immunities and blessings, his own blessed word, and there survey the riches of his grace and love in our redemption, till our hearts grow warm and our affections are kindled towards him, and we have this most comfortable of all proofs that we are indeed his, by *the love we bear him*; and, wonderful to think of, this love is his own gift too, for we have nothing to return him for his inestimable benefits but what he himself puts into our hands and hearts to bring him. Therefore we pray with the Church, that *he would graft* in our hearts the love of his name, &c. Therefore, I pray for you and your dear husband, that you may abound in this love more and more; for that you have it, is evident from what you say of your earnest desires “to live to him

who died for you." As it is he who hath given you these desires, be *assured* that he will bring them to a good and perfect effect, *you praying and watching* thereto with all humbleness and earnestness of mind, as you yourself see clearly the necessity of. As to me, I am quite confounded at what you say of my feeble attempts to make your kind visit to me pleasant and profitable to you; it only makes me feel how unprofitable a servant I am to my Master, though at the same time I acknowledge that I perfectly comprehend what a good and gracious Master I serve, and that I doubt not in the least of his acceptance of me, weak as my efforts, poor as all my offerings are; but a cup of cold water, you know, given to a disciple of his, and for his name's sake, shall in no wise lose its reward. Now I did, and shall, (if it please God) entertain you and Mr. ——— always upon that best principle and motive. Therefore, as there is a reward annexed to it, even a reward from Christ, you see how rich and happy you will make me by coming again.

I began this yesterday, but being then interrupted, finish it to day, (Sunday) that another post may not be lost. I am not quite well, and have, in one sense, heavy duty to do to-day, in another, pleasant and delightful. O! had I *strength* to lay out in Christ's service! But it is all right, blessed be his name for weakness as well as strength—*for all things!*

I beg my best respects to your whole family, but *especial* love to your husband, and thanks to him for coming himself and bringing you, and so believe me, (as I think) in everlasting bonds of love with both of you, ever, dear Madam,

Your's, &c.

To Mrs. ———.

Chelwood, July 13, 1813.

My dear Friend,

I am ashamed to have let a second basket arrive from you, before I acknowledged the favor of the first. It may seem as if I did not own the hand that fed me; but yet I do, and am truly obliged to you for all your kindnesses. I always consider them as tokens of love (as I believe I have more than once expressed myself,) from One who loves us all, who is *love itself*, and helps and incites us to do what we can to shew our love to one another. I give you all joy, my dear Friend, of your nephew's marriage. I think you rightly style it a *happy* one; it really promises to be so: for what can put asunder those hearts that are united *in Christ*? What is the cause of all the misery that there is in the world in the married state, (and there is much more than appears,) but that people are *unequally yoked together*—that even Christians too often take a partner for life, upon other principles and with other views than those of a real *religious* union? When that is the case, they cannot expect a blessing. But our dear Mr. — has not done so, and I verily think has chosen one that will agree with him in devotion to God, and charity to man. They will go along together in Christ's *easy yoke*, and that will sanctify the pleasures, and alleviate the cares and burdens, they will find mingled in their way through life. I pray God they may long live to grow in grace together, and be helpers to others: if they keep their eyes steadily fixed on *Jesus*, they will. If they consider the duties of the station they are placed in, and make the discharge of them their *pleasure*, their *joy*,

they *will* have joy and pleasure. If they seek it any where else, they will so far fail. But in many things we *all* fail; and if it were not for the *unfailing perfect* righteousness and merits of the Redeemer—if it were not for *his* unfailing strength and grace, how should we appear before God, or how prepare for it? how should we be *justified*, or *sanctified*, or *cleansed in our consciences*, and enabled to go on through this troublesome world with *hope* and *comfort*? But if Jesus is with us, *joy* and *peace* are with us, and nothing shall *effectually* interrupt us in our way to heaven. Let us, my dear Friend, be more *above* than we are; let us get into the habit of removing ourselves from the world and worldly things *before* God removes us from them, and let our hearts and earthly affections die before our bodies. Let it not be thought by any of us that Christ came to wash us from our sins, and open a way for us to heaven, while we still retain our earthly minds, and are as careful about the contemptible things of *time* as if there were no *eternity*. O let us by his *precepts*, *promises*, and *example*, and above all by his *Spirit*, which can alone make them powerful, endeavour to have our *souls* fashioned and moulded for the glorious state we profess to be looking to; that we may enter into it as a thing of *course*, as an element *fitted* for us; and be in the mean time *certain*, from what we already feel and taste of it, that it *shall* be ours.

It gives me great satisfaction to hear that dear Mr. ——— is reviving and recruiting in his health; and I doubt not it will please him and you to be told, that within a little while past I have found much amendment in mine. I beg my affectionate respects to him.

I am, &c.

ON THE BENEFITS OF AFFLICTION.

To Mrs. ———

Chelwood, Sept. 23, 1814.

My dear Madam,

I am quite concerned to hear that your father-in-law's health is still so delicate. May he find *God* to be a support, a stronghold in the day of trouble. We most of us cleave too much to other supports, till we find by experience they are all nought—no help in them; and it is well if we find it out in time to lay hold on better securities, and to cast our anchor where there will be a sure fastening, so that we may ride out the storms and trials of life, and death too, in safety. Trials are appointed for us all—sufferings of various kinds; and where health, and wealth, and every external circumstance, seem to exempt us from suffering, perhaps we shall find, as Christians, that we are called to suffer most, because most in danger of following and gratifying our own will; for this is the great thing to be given up and crucified. Here it is that we are so often reduced to complain of ourselves, and to lie down in a state of weakness and discouragement, when we should be up and doing, and fighting the good fight of faith. We do not like to have our *wills* crucified; we wish to be thriving Christians without that. Whereas that is the leading and governing faculty in *the whole* Christian warfare. If our will be brought into subjection and conformity to the will of God, all things will go well, smoothly, and prosperously. Then religion will be in us a vigorous active principle, (as far as the body will suffer it to be so,) and we shall run with patience and

perseverance in the race that is set before us; and what is more, with *assurance* of the prize. But if not, and we be doing our own ways, and finding our own pleasure, and consulting our own interests, and declining the way of the cross, which all distinguished Christians have ever trod; and deviating into the world's more easy way, which many sincere Christians do in many respects so unhappily fall into, that it can scarcely be known what they are and to whom they belong; then we shall, at best, know little either of the power or pleasures of *godliness*; we shall be uncomfortable and unprofitable creatures, and if we do get to heaven, shall differ as much in glory from some that are there, as we have differed from them here in devotedness to Christ.

You do well then to pray for "a devotional spirit;" and let us all pray for it, my dear Friend, not only for ourselves but others. But let us well understand what is comprehended in a devotional spirit. It is nothing less than the "presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." It is "yielding ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead." It is putting off self and putting on Christ, who devoted himself for us all. They that have been at all *remarkable* for a devotional spirit, have generally gone great lengths in separation from the world, in laborious offices of charity, in resolute habits of self-denial, and bodily mortification; and though I would not recommend all the things that some have practised this way, or even answer for the principle on which they have been done, yet it cannot be doubted that real and sincere devotion does call upon us for great inward and outward sacrifices, and that a devotional spirit and conformity to the

world are downright opposites; that the lovers of their own selves and their own pleasures are not the lovers of God; and that God, in his sovereign wisdom and goodness, has made a participation of his holiness and blessed image, the only way of attaining to his *happiness*, both here and hereafter.

Thus, my dear Friend, I have given you somewhat of a severe sermon; but I preach it as much to myself as to you and yours; for I frequently suspect myself of asking for more than I would wish to have, considering all the *denials* that must accompany it. It might be retorted upon me, and many, I fear, who are ambitious of a distinguished place as Christians, and of a great portion of Christ's Spirit, "Ye know not what ye ask." "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?—can ye indeed renounce the world, and trample upon it as I have done? Can ye mortify self, as I have done, and live only to do the Father's will? Can ye lay yourselves out and all your talents for the profit and pleasure of others, and especially of these my brethren, my humble, simple, faithful people? Can ye thus make yourselves *victims* to the *gracious principle*, and thus sacrifice to your God upon the altar of faith? Do you really desire the *power* to do this from a growing persuasion and experience of the insufficiency of worldly things and selfish gratifications to make you happy?—nay, on the contrary, of their absolute tendency to make you miserable? If your desires point this way, though feebly, your prayers shall be heard, and it shall be seen that it was in your heart to follow and be led by Me, by the increasing devotedness of your lives to Me. Thus shall ye bring forth much fruit, and so shall ye be my disciples.

I am, &c. &c.

TO A LADY, AFTER THE LOSS OF HER HUSBAND.

Chelwood, February 10, 1815.

My dear ———,

To stand aloof, in the season of affliction, from those we love, would be a proof that we loved them not, if insurmountable impediments did not hinder our advancing to them; and such have really been the cause of my not endeavouring, till now, to be the means of pouring some little consolation into your mind, for the greatest earthly loss your God could call upon you to suffer. I might have held a pen, indeed, but my head would have refused to guide it, and even now is in no state for many reflections. But the heart and feelings will, by God's grace, I hope, supply that deficiency, and help me to persuade you not only of my sincere sympathy with you in your distress, but what is of vastly more consequence to you to be assured of, of the tender love and mercy of God towards his creatures, and especially those who have thrown themselves upon his mercies in Christ Jesus, however it may seem fit to him in his wisdom to lay present afflictions upon them. I hope and believe I may reckon you, my dear Friend, among the friends and disciples of Christ, among those who have accepted God's mercies in the Saviour, and therefore who are in some weak measure (for, O! how weak are we in this matter!) ready to present themselves to him as a *living sacrifice*, to do or suffer as he shall appoint. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, let us arm ourselves likewise with the same mind." But while we feel our crosses

and sufferings, let us, my dear Friend, confess and acknowledge our blessings and comforts, and even our blessings arising from our discomforts. Can you fail (no I am sure you cannot) to consider here the mercy extended to your dear husband; the grace bestowed upon him when he most needed it; the support given him, when he found himself sinking under all worldly helps and supports; the comfort and strength communicated to him through the love of God in his Son Jesus Christ. Will it not be a balm to you to reflect that he cried out for the balm of the great Physician, and that the great Physician was at hand to heal and make him happy? Such is the account given me of him in his last days; and therefore surely you will think those were his best days, nay, *your* best days, since they led him, as it should appear, decidedly to God, and prepared him for being with God. And how long will it be, my dear Friend, ere *we* shall follow him? Why, but a very little moment, a space of time so short, when we think of eternity, that one would almost wonder we could sorrow at all in such cases, and with such a prospect of meeting for ever. But the flesh is weak; and, alas! our *faith* is weak; here is the evil. But let us pray God to strengthen it; let us pray God to send us the *Comforter*, who, as the promise runs, shall abide with his people for ever; be *with* them and dwell *in* them amidst all their sorrows and trials; to cheer and strengthen and animate their souls; to lead them on to victory, and assure them of the crown of righteousness and life eternal. Pray for this blessed guest, Madam; entertain him; cherish him; do nothing to drive him from you. In your patience possess your soul. Think

of the abundant blessings yet left you ; nay, think how God has blessed you, both in the piety of those that are departed, as well as in the piety (or the good hope of it) of those that remain to you. Consider yourself, therefore, as a highly favored Christian ; and as such, address yourself to a more devoted offering of your remaining life and talents to God. The more we lay ourselves out in works of love and mercy, the more will the sense of love and mercy visit us ; the more we expel earthly things from our hearts, the more shall we know of heavenly things ; the more we take up the burdens of our suffering neighbours, the less shall we feel our own burdens—the nearer will Christ seem to be to us, who came to sustain every burden for us, and to break every yoke : only let all be done for *him*, or else nothing is done. Now, may the God of all grace and peace and holy consolation visit your soul, my dear Friend. May Jesus, the great Friend of us all, be made more precious to you through this loss of your best earthly friend. May his countenance shine upon you. May his tender love be clearly revealed to you. May he come to you spiritually, and even now wipe away all tears from your eyes, in preparation for, and foretaste of, a time when sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever. As to myself, dear Madam, I shall only say that I consider I have lost, in your husband, a very kind friend, whose memory I shall always respect and cherish. And thus, with most affectionate remembrances to all around you,

I am, &c.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO A LADY.

Chelwood, March 12, 1811.

My dear ———,

Your most acceptable and friendly letter has lain by me too long unanswered; but be assured I prize and value it, for in truth there is no pleasure and joy on earth equal to the holding communion with those who truly love God, or if we cannot personally converse with them, at least hearing from them that their souls prosper, and that they *walk* in the truth; not *talk* of it well merely, (for *this* great numbers can do in these days of profession,) but *walk* in it—breathe it into their souls as their elemental life and nourishment, and hold it forth in their whole conversation, to the advancement of God's glory, and their own peace and comfort. Now the very foundation of this is, that "Christ died for us, according to the Scriptures," "bore our sins," as you say, and "carried our sorrows," and ever liveth to make intercession for us. Yes, it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again; and who is he then that shall lay any thing to the charge of those who are justified of God through *him*? And more especially, who shall charge them with being careless of honoring Christ, and with forgetting to walk after the spirit of Christ? If the world *will* make such charges, it shall not, by God's grace, be of you or me; and as we have set to our seal that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, let us seal it upon our consciences by a heavenly and holy life. Happy am I, my dear friend, that you write in a state of comfort and confidence like this, believing that Christ hath washed you from your sins in his blood,

and making *that* the motive with you for pressing on towards the prize set before you. This is as it should be, and may the Lord make you to increase and abound in every good word and work. But you have your reverses, it seems, and who has not? Your sensible enjoyments, you say, are too often interrupted, and you humbly add, by your own folly and want of faith. Then do not let faith stagnate; stir it up by every means offered you, particularly by prayer; and carry it, when you seem most to obtain it, into *exercise*—into all its proper employments. So shall it be strengthened still more, and glory to God be the happy consequence. Yet after all, my dear friend, let us not measure our faith by our sensible consolations. Let us lay the main stress upon the consciousness of an upright heart in duty, and a steady and constant *desire* to please and to be approved of our God and Saviour. It is scarcely safe for us to expect or to possess continued refreshment of soul. You may have observed, that they who never know what scarcity is, are seldom the best improvers of their plenty; and I am apt to think, that could our fond desires be indulged fully with those spiritual joys which we now and then taste a little of, it would not issue in our soul's wealth and prosperity *on the whole*. These are the reflections I quiet my own mind with when (as at present,) it is low and dull, and may they be useful to you at similar seasons. Yet, think as one will, joy is joy, and therefore we who have experienced what it is, shall never be thoroughly happy and content till we come into *his* presence with whom is *fulness* of joy. Oh! who can appreciate the blessing of a hope laid up in heaven, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, a

hope that is an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast? Every thing is fluctuating around us, and our own hearts are as unstable as water till we are grappled to Christ. Then we have a resting-place. "We which have believed do enter into rest," even here upon earth, in comparison with the state of those who are tossed about in the world. Yet, as the matter is of such immense consequence, we can none of us be too careful in searching out the evidences of a saving faith, lest after all we should come short of the promised and final rest.

Mercies surround me, and though my health confines me, I am well enough to receive at home dear friends in whom I have an interest; but as to labor, it is over. God has done what he meant to do by *me*, I believe. Yet while I have health and senses, I hope to declare his name and grace to *me* above all sinners. And so, my dear Miss ———, with unfeigned thanks for your remembrance of me,

I am, &c.

Chelwood, Monday, August 1, ———.

My dear Friend,

How sorry am I to be still deferring so great a happiness to myself, as it would be, to come to ——— for a few days. I am sure it seems as hard to me as it can to you; but patience must be exercised, and it is good for us. My poor young friend and parishioner is still with me; and I have been even balancing whether I should not keep her here to die. It would be for *her soul's* comfort and *mine* too; but whether my poor weak body would not quite sink under the

pressure of such continued exertion, and the many inconveniences it would occasion, I am much in doubt, and I hope I shall have resolution to consent to her going home (should she be able) some day this week. In that case, though it would be too late to come to you, it might leave me a day for seeing you both here within the present week, suppose we say Friday. I shall dine at three—a Gothic hour—but you will excuse it; nay, I hope you will come earlier if you do come, that I may have as much of you as possible, and you will escape heat by it. My old bed you *have* both slept in, and therefore may take up with it once again. A fit of vanity at one time prompted me to think of furbishing up the whole room. I can hardly tell you what elegancies I imagined, but my illness at Clifton put them all out of my head and out of my pocket too; and I am just as well without them, if you also can say so. This will reach you, I apprehend, to-morrow; so that if you incline to do so, you may write me a line to say if you can or do come. But if you come without writing, there will be no difference, except in some little jar of uncertainty upon my nerves. On the other hand, should poor languishing Miss ——— be worse, and incapable of removing before Friday, I will let you know it by Wednesday's post, though even in that case there would be the same sleeping room for you, though not the use of my little drawing room above. God bless you both. I am sorry to have filled my paper with nothing but mere arrangements; but I am in bonds of true Christian friendship and love towards you both.

Ever yours.

Chelwood, October 29, 1811.

My dear ———,

I have been from home for a week, and came back but yesterday, so I could not answer your letter sooner. I have been in much affliction for the loss of my dear young friend, Miss ———.* Almost my whole attention had been swallowed up in her for some previous weeks; but on the sixth of the month she died. And though her death was so blessed a one as to fill me at the time with thankfulness—nay, with wonder—to see and witness what God can do for those that love him, and walk humbly and steadily with him; yet when that wonder, gratitude, and joy subsided, a very deep sorrow took place. It was not a little trying to me to bury her. It was more distressing to preach a sermon upon the subject of her death, (things that my conscience would not let me decline;) yet God in his mercy brought me through all in safety; but I found it absolutely expedient afterwards to shift the scene a little. Thus I have run over in a moment what for a length of time engaged me most seriously, and still engages me, and I trust *will* engage me in one sense while I live: I mean, to a more close meditation upon death and preparation for it. I never before saw in any instance so clear an evidence of the soul's being a distinct thing from the body; it was a sort of ocular demonstration, that the one went out of the other as

* The young friend alluded to in his last letter. He was her spiritual father in Christ; and he watched over her both in body and soul, in her last illness, with a tenderness worthy of the "true Pastor."

out of a house or tabernacle no longer fit for it, to one that was fit for it—"a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Adieu, my dear Friend.

Chelwood, February 1, 1814.

My dear Madam,

You make many beautiful reflections upon our entrance into another year; and when I say beautiful, I mean also *feeling* reflections, for elegant expressions are far from always including *heart* sentiments and *experience*. But there is a penitential sense of ingratitude for past and countless mercies, and of humiliation for past sins, which mark your letter as the production of a real Christian. The review, indeed, of any, even the *best* portion (as it might be thought) of our lives, is humbling enough; yet let us cherish this humility, as the very parent of exaltation, for it leads us to renounce every dependence in the matter of salvation but Christ; it shews us how precious, how necessary he is to us. And if it teaches us that he is *all* our salvation, it will also teach us to make him *all* our *desire*; and a principal part of this desire will be, *to be like* him, and *like-minded* with him—blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, shining as lights in a dark and crooked world; but especially ready to humble ourselves in the view and by the consideration of *his* astonishing humiliation. Thus our religion begins and ends with humility. But ought it to cripple our exertions, that after all, our copy will be a very faint and

imperfect one indeed? or will our sole dependence on Christ for salvation prevent our working out our own salvation with fear and trembling? God forbid; for "it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do;" and with such a source of help we may well be confident that our labor in the Lord shall not be in vain; we may well exert ourselves to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." There is no perversion of the gospel of Christ which I so much detest and shudder at as the taking advantage of his *grace* to sin against his *law*. We are sometimes accused, and that by persons of apparent authority, of doing this; and there is nothing better for the sincere disciple of Christ to do, under the weight of this unjust stigma, than to follow Him in praying for our revilers. They know not what they do while they so lacerate our religious reputation. If they killed the body it would little matter, but they try to kill our influence in the spreading of divine *truth*, and the being instrumental to the divine *life* among men; but wisdom is and will be justified of her children. Happy are you, my dear Friend, that you are not so obnoxious as some are to these trials. You will have nothing to attend to but to go along in the quiet path of domestic duty, and to serve your God with singleness and gladness of heart; only praying against the peculiar snares of worldly prosperity, and always recollecting that there is one manner of redemption for the rich and poor, the high and low; one price paid, one way of salvation by Christ; one way of receiving him; one way of walking in him. And may the God of all grace supply the spirit of Christ to you in large measure. May the present year be productive of the *fruits* of the Spirit in

you ; may you have light given you to trace and mark the deficiencies and failings, and actual and positive transgressions of the last, so as not only to be convinced (for this you are convinced of) that you are a sinner by nature, but to discover also what were the particular and more immediate causes that led to them, even under grace. This should be the study of us all ; not so as to discourage our hearts, or to entangle us in doubts and scruples, but to keep us properly watchful, properly aware of Satan and his devices, and properly thankful and grateful to him who hath subdued every enemy, and broken every yoke for us, and delivered us into the liberty of the gospel, from the terrors and bondage of a legal covenant. I *could* go on wishing you, upon *paper*, every grace and blessing, till my letter were a long one indeed, but my heart and prayers must continue it ; for I cannot write long at a time, and have written *thus* far at intervals. Now therefore, my dear Madam,

Adieu, &c.

Chelwood, March 9.

My dear Friend,

I generally begin with talking of a short letter, and yet end with a long one ; but I cannot deny you any longer the satisfaction of knowing how much improved I am in my health. Seclusion and silence have been my best medicines, I believe, *under God* ; for is not *He* the great Healer and Deliverer ? Is it not through *his* mercy and blessing that I am what I am, both in body and soul ? I have had much comfort and

great freedom from many temptations that have usually beset me—a wandering imagination one of them, and God has graciously enabled me to employ my time and thoughts to some profit. Prayer and praise have not been straitened; and indeed in the view of my mercies, such as have been mentioned, and innumerable others, (for I am encompassed with mercy,) it may be supposed that praise has been *predominant*. May it always be so both with you and with me! We can all *pray*—nay, we are driven to it by our follies and sins, which keep us in pretty good practice this way; but I look upon it that the habitual bursting out of praise, both first and last, when we are before the throne of grace, is a very comfortable sign of growing grace and increasing strength in the assurance of covenanted mercies, and true heart acquaintance with the love of God. One thing I verily believe has been particularly beneficial to me, and you will not be surprized at it—the *regular reading of the Bible*. I am got far through it as a whole book, and I hope shall finish it quite before interruptions occur. The strength and sweetness contained in it, I never so tasted before. Should I live another winter, I trust in God I shall employ it in the same way. But I am falling into egotism, to which you in some degree led me by what you said. With you, however, I run on without much advertance, and in full confidence of your charity, in the double sense of passing over my infirmities, and also partaking of my pleasures. What makes *me happy* I am inclined to speak of to *you of course*, and what *burdens* me I should scarcely conceal. This is the great privilege of Christian communications, if one member rejoice all

the members rejoice with it, and if it suffer, they are glad to alleviate the suffering by participation: they have a pleasure in that too.

If I continue in health, (for I have told you I *am* in health,) I trust I shall have courage to invite you hither, if you should be so inclined. In the mean time, I am, with true affection for you,

Ever yours.

Chelwood, December 22.

My dear Friend,

Our letters crossed each other, and neither one or the other could be said to be an answer: however, I had the great satisfaction of finding that you were come safe back, and happily lodged in the bosom of your glad family; and you, on the other hand, had the satisfaction to hear of my welfare, and to find that I was not entirely unmindful of you. Here you will find me (if I live) at any time during the winter; and I am sure I need not say how it would refresh my heart to receive you: but still there must be stipulations. I shall be keeping Christmas for a week or two with my parishioners, whom I usually invite to dine with me by parties, and I should by no means wish you to fall in with these. But again, whenever the happiness of seeing you is allowed me, I would beg that it might be on any or all of the days of the week but Sunday; for I am embarked in an undertaking which would forbid my enjoyment of your society on that day, blessed as it would otherwise be to tread the courts of the Lord's house with you, and

to commune of the mercies experienced there. I am, in short, doing duty at a second church; and these two services not only occupy me the whole of the day, but leave me so exhausted that perfect silence and repose is absolutely necessary for me during the evening. You will perhaps blame me for thus exerting myself; but you would not if you knew all the circumstances, which it would be long to tell you of; but really I have been led into this (almost against my will—certainly quite contrary to my intentions,) by the will and providence of God, who seems to have designed, and therefore I hope for some gracious purpose, that I should undertake it. The promise is, that as our *day* is so shall our *strength* be, and I have truly found it so. I am amazed at the facility with which I pass to Pensford, after having done the service here, and hither after having done it there. It must have dropped entirely, (for all refused it, or gave it up again having entered upon it,) had not I stood forth and said, “*Send me.*” And I am so clear of any vanity in it, (for it is not a *flattering* congregation,) and also of any interested motive,—for I lose instead of getting by it,—that I stand upon most comfortable ground. I know that my desire to help a few poor ignorant people is a pure one, who, if I interposed not, would once only in a fortnight have divine service. But enough, and more than enough, of myself. I long to see you,

And am ever, &c. &c.

Chelwood, March 17.

My dear ———,

To me there is never any excuse necessary for silence, because, though I am glad to hear from my dear friends, and value the expressions of their kindness, I do not conclude them less kind when their words do *not* reach me; I know their *thoughts* do, and I know it by my own case, who am very irregular as a correspondent, but not unmindful in my heart and in my prayers of those I love. Besides, my dear respected Friend, I do not *claim*, though I *prize* your letters. You have favoured me with some of them; and I, of course, make a return to them when I can, and as well as I can. But I am sure I feel that I could have no right to such attentions, and can truly say I never expected them; but a gracious God gives us friends and blessings and pleasures that we never looked for, and has been peculiarly bountiful to *me* in this way; indeed, in what way has he *not* been bountiful?—pardoning all my sins, and refreshing my soul with his grace. And when these, the *great leading mercies* of his covenant, have been bestowed upon me, can I wonder that other mercies and blessings have reached me? Will he not, my dear Friend, when he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will he not with him also freely give us all things? At least, may we not humbly expect from him the inferior comforts and helps of life, when he has given us the Comforter himself, and the *great Friend* to cheer us and support us through this wilderness? Certainly we may; and I continually, in one way or another, experience the truth

of that promise, "that having first sought the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other things shall be added unto us." You, my dear Friend, are frequently employed in adding some of these temporal things to *me*, and have now sent me a supply of them. Your care of me hath flourished again, (as the apostle expresses himself) and I cannot but heartily thank you, "not that I desire a gift," for I never think of such things till I see them. But certainly I desire and pray that you may be always employed in acts of love, in acts of charity, as "fruit that may abound to your account," only wishing that you may ever meet with persons that are more worthy of it than I am.

I hope that Mr. ——— is in tolerable health. Life is valuable, and health is valuable. I know how valuable by the want of it, and by the waste of *life* heretofore, I know how to prize that too. Indeed, when I look that way, I should be tempted to severities and revenges upon myself, if I did not clearly see the *freedom* of the covenant of grace; that the mercy shewed us is at *all times* and seasons of life altogether gratuitous; and that he who comes last into the vineyard, is precisely upon the same footing with him who came first—he has *repented*; he has *believed* the gospel; he has thrown himself upon *God's promises*, and *Christ's all-sufficient merits*, for justification, sanctification, and every grace and blessing in time and to eternity; and all this by God's grace. And therefore let him rejoice *in the Lord*, and in the power of *his* might; go on fighting the good fight of faith, and struggling with his corruptions, till it shall please God to "deliver him entirely from the bondage of corruption, into the glori-

ous liberty of the sons of God." This, my dear kind Friend, is all we can do; and this, I trust, *you* are doing. And pray let me counsel you to go on in it without entanglement. Endeavour at every *feature* in the Christian character; cultivate every *grace* that can *adorn* it: only do not esteem the *ornaments*, the *adjuncts*, the *evidences*, as if they were the thing itself—the *body* is *more* valuable than the *dress* it wears. Now, the body of Christianity is *Christ himself*, made ours by *faith* only, through the blessed operation of the *Holy Spirit*—a *Spirit*, a *power*, which, wherever it lights, produces its proper fruits of holiness, to the praise and glory of God, to the edification of our neighbours, and the comfort of our own souls. Let us *press forward*, but *cheerfully* and *without doubting*, when we have once settled the point of a *child-like* dependence upon Christ, of a *sincere affection* for him, and a desire to be more *with him and closer to him*. And so doing, let us be assured that he will help us on, (in the very best way for us) to the end of this scene of things, and after that receive us into *glory*.

I am, &c. &c.

Frome, October 30.

My dear Friend,

I really thought, after that kind visit you and Mr. ——— made me at my cottage, that it would not be long before I should write to you to express my thanks for it in a more deliberate manner than so sudden and short a pleasure permitted me to do, and also

by way of reply to a very acceptable letter I had received from you just before; but time runs on, alas! too imperceptibly to most of us, so that the season for doing things well, and as they ought to be done, escapes us; for my intention was to enquire after you all at Weymouth, and convey thither my earnest wishes and prayers that you all might receive the full benefit and pleasure you hoped for from that journey. Whereas now, having reason to suppose you are returned to ———, I shall direct a letter to you there, humbly trusting that the prayers and wishes I made in my heart, though I did not write them to you with ink, have been heard, and that you are safely arrived every one of you, improved in health and growing in grace, at your own sweet residence. Most assuredly I do pray that grace may be the portion of your whole family; that, if there are any among them who have it not, they *may* have it in God's good time, and that whoever has it may have it more abundantly. We can none of us do better than to examine ourselves daily whether we *be* in the faith, and whether grace hath indeed brought us to communion and true intercourse with God, through him who came to heal every breach, and close that sad separation that sin had made between God and us. Yet in examinations of this kind, while we accuse ourselves before God, and humble ourselves in the dust for our innumerable failings and actual transgressions, we must at the same time give full scope to the covenant of mercy revealed to us through faith in the Saviour; we must so look at sin in ourselves, as to go out of ourselves to find the remedy for it, and to lay hold of complete deliverance from it *in Christ*. *He* is our *peace*, our

righteousness, our *sanctification*, our *redemption* in every sense; for in him the Holy Spirit himself is promised us to guide and lead us into all truth, and to make us those teachable creatures you pray in your letter, my dear Friend, to become, and which I doubt not you are; but to make *progress* in teachableness (that is, humility,) should be our earnest desire; and if we do (as undoubtedly we *shall*,) make progress, we shall be instructed to know the things that are freely given us of God, to be assured that we *are* partakers of the Holy Spirit promised, who is therefore called *the Spirit of promise*, and in which assurance we cannot be mistaken when we find him to be a Spirit of love in our hearts, a Spirit of power to resist and overcome sin, a Spirit of *a sound mind*, to discern what is that good and acceptable will of God to which we must conform. Thus humility and a truly teachable mind will introduce us to the sight of the highest privileges of grace; and our sanctification and enjoyment of divine influences will go on increasing, till we are fitted to be removed to another world, and made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. This is that lively sense of heavenly and eternal things which you long for in greater measure, and for which you are aware you must not look to me, or to *any* creature, how far soever advanced in grace and holiness above me, but to Him who is *holiness* and *life* itself, who makes us understand wisdom secretly and enables us to delight in it—that true and heavenly wisdom which sets at nought the wisdom of the world, and is in turn set at nought by it; but wisdom will be justified of all her children, when the dawns and drawings of grace in the soul—the mere beginnings, as

it were, of godliness, (for here we are but in a state of pupilage and childhood,) shall end in its perfection and fulness, and in *a glorious manifestation of the sons of God*. To this consummation of blessedness, my dear Friend, let us be constantly looking; yet not so as to undervalue the blessings *here* bestowed upon us, or overlook the privileges we already enjoy. In fact, our present privileges are the earnest and security for our future ones. Doubt not then, my dear Friend, but firmly believe that as God has promised by Jesus Christ to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, and as you have humbly and heartily sought that *great gift*, that it is indeed yours. Use it, therefore, without questioning your right to it, for that right is not on account of any thing in yourself, but entirely on account of God's gracious covenant, through Christ's merits: eye the Saviour more, yourself less. Use, I say, the grace given, a part of which grace is humble confidence; be strong in the Lord and the power of his might, that you may repel all uncomfortable suggestions, and go on rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulations, instant in prayer, and distributing to the necessities of the saints. Using grace in this way you shall not fail to know that you have it, and that "its transforming power has quickened and invigorated your steps," and that it *will* lead you finally to glory. "The medicines administered to our souls in the shape of disappointments" are sharp medicines certainly, and you have had your share of them; but how thankful ought you to be that they have not been administered in vain! how ought you to bless God that he sent along with them that *impressive power*, without which afflictions in themselves have no power

to make us turn to him in earnest, and after having produced a little *natural* softening, leave us as they found us, *unsubdued, unhumbled, unconverted* to God! But *we* have not so learned Christ—but *we* have not so been taught by God, as the truth is in Jesus, therefore let us be *thankful* and *joyful*!

You see, dear Madam, that I have run through my paper, and have but just room left to say a word of myself, which you will probably expect; and I have the pleasure to tell you, that through mercy I am vastly strengthened in my health since I left home.

Yours, &c.

Chelwood, January 21, 1813.

My dear Friend,

You always do every thing that is kind, and do it in the kindest and best way; and I cannot long omit thanking you for this last act of friendship in congratulating me upon my son's preferment, which in point of provision is every thing I can wish for him, and in other circumstances is a respectable comfortable thing. You very truly observe that this must shed a gleam of serene light, as to things of this world, upon the evening of my life. I had nothing myself to add to what I had already given him, and the Bishop has kindly stepped in to supply that deficiency, and has made him easy—not that I think he would have been otherwise than easy without it. He has grace to believe in God's promises, which are *sure things*, while all the inheritances of this world are not only passing away, but are both corruptible and corrupting things. Indeed it is so, and

you *know* it (I thank God,) to be so; therefore, in the midst of mercies and blessings, be a pilgrim still. It is an idea you are fond of, and in truth is wonderfully suitable to the Christian's state here. But is this a drawback to the enjoyment of our good things? God forbid it should be!—nay, the only *way* of enjoying them (which is one of the paradoxes of Christianity,) is the constant recollection and humble acknowledgment that they are not our own. This will make us hold them as a talent to be accounted for, and enable us to use them with moderation and thankfulness.

You cannot look forward with greater pleasure than I do, to our hoped for meeting; and if your dear wife should indulge me by accompanying you, I think this will be a gilding to my humble roof that I had need pray heartily not to be vain of. God bless you both, (for I here grow serious,) and make you a blessing. I could hardly say more were I to cover a whole sheet with prayers.

I remain, &c.

LETTERS AND EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO A
CLERGYMAN.

Chelwood, September 18, —.

My dear Sir,

I may almost say it was a *grief* to me to miss you and your friend the last week, so happy should I have been in your company. And I was the more pained as I found, upon enquiry, that my servants did not offer you a breakfast, which they could

very well have given you, for they have the hands of my stores in that way. But you should have *asked* for it, and that would have saved me, I assure you, much uneasiness; at least it would have been some satisfaction to me to think you had had refreshment here. These little cross matters however will occur, and much greater ones in life, and nothing past can be recalled; only remember, that if you ever find yourself within reach of any accommodation my poor house can afford, you may use it freely as if it were your own. This is no compliment; Christians should not use themselves to say more than they intend and feel. I really do feel affection for you, and am particularly obliged for your kindness in taking so much pains to come to me. I live in the hope of returning your visits some day or other; but my time is short *this* season, as I suppose I must betake myself, ere long, to the coast of Devon, for a little shelter from the cold, which affects me so much that I cannot go on with my ministerial duties in the winter. This is a burden to be submitted to and borne patiently, as every thing else that God sees fit to lay upon us: it all works for good to those who love him, as I trust you and I do, unworthy as we are. *You*, I hope, have much of life before you, wherein to *shew* your love by labouring in his service. You have already, doubtless, found that *his* service is perfect freedom; and that they who serve him willingly and zealously, do never go without *some* reward from him even here. A *taste* of his grace and goodness and holy comforts, is far better than all the things the world can provide for us. I have not the least doubt that his *best* blessings will attend you, because I doubt not you

will continue to *pray* for them; not the meat that perisheth, (of that, by a good Providence, you have enough,) but the bread that endureth; and oh! what an honor is it to be commissioned to feed others with it, that is, to invite them to take of it freely as it is offered to us in the gospel; to accept Jesus Christ himself and all his unsearchable riches. What an unspeakable honor and privilege, that such poor creatures as we are should be made the instruments of raising up souls to life again, by preaching the *word of life*, in his name, who *is* life, and has life in himself, and who came down into the world that we might have it more abundantly. Go on and prosper, my very dear Sir. "Ride on," (in attendance upon your Master,) "because of the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness; and *his* right hand," (his grace and strength accompanying you,) "will teach you terrible things." Ps. xlv. 4. His arrows are sharp in the hearts of his enemies. His convictions will reach them by *your* means and ministry, (at least I hope so,) and the people shall be subdued to him. But remember, my dear Sir, that you have a frail body, and do not labor beyond your strength. Your constitution seems slender, manage it, and do not be imprudent in your exertions. You have my most hearty prayers for every blessing to you, and I hope you will give me yours. Let us watch unto prayer, and pray that we may watch. Let us call upon God, and *wait* upon him. Let us cultivate an abiding sense of our own weakness and insufficiency, that we may be driven always to draw from *his* fulness; and when we are most weak, be enabled to find out that then we are most strong. Let us cultivate humility, after the great example of our Lord, and

charity, keeping him in our eye who is love itself, so shall we be his disciples and servants. But I must advert again to your letter and visit. You will conclude, though I did not mention it, that the letter did not arrive till after I had left home, otherwise you would have had some care taken of you and your friend. I beg you to make my respects to him when you see or write to him, and say, that I hope at some future time (if I live) to have the happiness of seeing him with you, and not merely for a meal, but to stay a night or two, which is the sort of visit I hope you, dear Sir, will make me in future, if you can, as I know you will, put up with my homely entertainment. I apprehend, however, you will not very long remain in my neighbourhood, as I am told you are presented to a living, where, after a while, I suppose you will reside. It will be a great loss to Mr. ——— and the parish; but God's providence can make it up to them, and I trust will do so. Pray give my affectionate respects to ———.

I am, &c.

Sidmouth, December 6.

My dear Friend,

Had your letter been directed to me here, you would have had a speedier answer to it. Very much indeed do I think myself obliged to you for the confidence you place in me, and the desire you evidently have to cultivate my good opinion, and to be supported by it.

Will you hear what the good Bishop Beveridge says, when he in his youthful days thought of a wife?—"I

shall endeavour to make choice of such a woman for my spouse as hath first made choice of Christ as a spouse for herself: that none may be made one flesh with me, who is not made one spirit with Christ my Saviour: for I look upon the image of Christ as the best mark of beauty I can behold in her, and the grace of God as the best portion I can receive with her." A great deal more follows, which you may see by consulting his "Private Thoughts." And now, my dear Sir, may God direct and incline you to that which will be for his glory and your own soul's good; and what is of still more consequence than any private good of yours, *the good of many souls committed to you*, who are deeply interested in what you are now about. Your usefulness in the ministry will greatly depend upon the step you are taking. If you mean to be a man of God you cannot be a man of the world; and the point to be ascertained is, whether your proposed companion for life is really prepared to renounce with you *that* beaten and broad path, and to go along with you heartily and cheerfully in the narrow unfrequented way of the cross: whether she has any right and proper apprehension that there is a cross to be borne by the true disciples of Christ, and that they are not of the world, even as He was not of the world. *You* have already found it to be so, and will more and more find it, if you persist in preaching the faith of Christ crucified, and "manfully fighting under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil." This every Christian vows to do; but the moment he begins to perform his vow, the world will be up in arms against him. These are the things that you must both find out together and be agreed upon, in order to be

happy together here and hereafter, and in order to be the means of making others happy. And if you find that you are truly agreed in them, then you will find me rejoicing with you as

Your affectionate and faithful servant.

Chelwood, June 10, 1811.

My ever dear Sir,

I cannot and perhaps ought not to tell you how much satisfaction I have derived from all that genuine kindness and love which breathes in your letter, because it is mixed, and if I may say so, leavened with thoughts of me as a Christian, which are far higher than the class I belong to in Christ's school. I have nothing in the world to say for myself, (and I would to God none would say any thing else of me or for me) but that I have reason, by God's grace, to think myself *sincere* in my faith and hope; and that such is the boundless mercy of God, that in his blessed covenant he hath not forgotten even me. With respect to yourself, my dear Friend, I do assure you that I have not ceased to think of you with a true interest; and had I *not* received this last letter from you, should certainly have written ere long, for never have I intended to drop my intercourse with you. No, the true servants of God, and especially his faithful ministers and messengers, (though, blessed be his name, there are many of them scattered about in a corrupt world, and shining as lights there) are not so numerous that we should think little of the least of them, or cease to praise God for the grace given them, and the personal know-

ledge of it we enjoy. How then could I be capable of slighting your friendship, whose zeal and ability to glorify God in the gospel of his dear Son, and to be an useful instrument in his hands for spreading true religion, I am so well assured of? But the truth is, that not my "numerous engagements," (as you suppose, and are kindly willing to admit of that excuse for me) but my numerous and increasing infirmities have arrested my pen; for though I do not mean to say, literally, that I have not been *able* to write letters, yet you know there is a sort of weakness and inaptitude, both of body and mind, (though I hope you will never know it experimentally) that amounts to a disqualification, at least as to any thing valuable in our letters, or equivalent to the labor of writing or reading them. Whether sick or well, I *feel* that mercy follows me; that health and prosperity are not the only blessings; and that *I* especially need the blessing of a salutary fatherly correction. How much idolatry is there still to be given up! how much vanity to be deadened and suppressed! how much unstedfastness to be reduced and regulated! how much worldliness to be weaned from! I do not pray or long to be exempted from trial, for this world is a state of trial, but for a more even, peaceful, quiet endurance till God shall take me out of it; for a spirit more conformed to his; and a carriage more suited to be of use to others while I do stay here. The whole of my usefulness now must consist in this, that as I cannot preach with my lips, or administer help and comfort to others by a personal attendance upon them, I may preach to them by whatever they can be witnesses to in my life and conversation, and resignation to God's will; and faithfully help

them by my private prayers and intercessions; and all through Him whose merits and intercessions have purchased, and do still procure for us, every gift and privilege we enjoy.

But enough and too much of myself. Let me express to you now my thanks to God for his mercies towards you, in your being happily and comfortably settled in your charge, and going on conscientiously in it with a *help*, as I trust, *meet for you*. Believe me, I have often formed a wish of being witness to your ways and doings at ———, because I am persuaded that they are right ways and doings, and intended for God's glory. From Mr. ——— you may suppose I have had some account of you in this respect. Go on, my ever dear Sir, in the blessed path his grace has set you in. Turn not aside from it to the right or to the left. You are moving in an humble unostentatious sphere, and so much the better. I know no greater snare for a young clergyman, than to be set high in popularity at first, and to have a *theatre* on which his vanity may be too easily drawn out. Be anxious to honor God where you are, and careful for nothing else in the world; for, in fact, have we not all of us the promise, "Those who honor me, *I* will honor?" Will not *God* take care for the honor and happiness of his servants, wherever they are? Can we, any of us, court higher things than he designs for us? or need we step aside to look out for *human* applause and support? On the other hand, we *must* be careful not to put human estimation altogether out of the question, for while we have to do with human beings, their good-will should be properly cultivated; their esteem, if possible, secured; and their

prejudices, by every allowable means, softened. And when we find, after all, (as we certainly shall, for the most part find, and particularly among the higher classes) that, having attempted what we could for their deliverance from the bondage of prejudice and error, they are still content in their chains, why we must let them alone, or wait at least for better opportunities; and in the mean time pray fervently and constantly for them, as you say you do. Only, from our *own proper rules of conduct*, we must never depart to please them, complying with maxims and practices which our own more enlightened conscience condemns; for such compliances may lead us we know not where, and have certainly a *tendency* to absolute apostacy. Somewhere we *must* make a stand, and the difficulty is to find out that point; though we know very well that ours is a holy faith and religion, and that there is a Holy Spirit to guide us in it, and give us a right judgment in *all* things. *His* assistance let us seek, and *his* dictates follow; and then, I will venture to say, that even they whom we do not *please*, will still *respect* us. But God forbid I should speak dictatorially, and *set* my own maxims up as a rule. There is but one rule for us all to look to, even Jesus Christ, our great ruler and pattern; keeping him in our eye, and the prize of our high calling *in* him, we cannot greatly fall or fail. My prayers shall never be wanting for you and yours, particularly in Mrs. ——'s present state, though perhaps she is already a joyful mother. You and she are now one person, and therefore, though I know her not personally, I cannot but be truly interested about her. The gracious God preserve you to each other, and give

you length of days together in holy love and all good works, to the honor and praise of his name.

My son, who grows in grace, has found the same difficulty that you are apprehensive of with respect to sponsors for his children, especially female ones. Undoubtedly you are right in wishing to have truly pious and conscientious persons to answer for your child, but if such cannot be had, you must take the best you can find; when we cannot do what we would, we must do what we can. I think *one* or more *believers* a point of consequence, for if the child be not presented to God in *faith*, (and this is their office) the very chain of the covenant seems broken. I should like very much to visit you for a day, should you be at home towards the end of July, when I have thoughts of going to my son's, and being once from home might include you in the circuit; but how uncertain are all these things, especially with *me*. In the mean time, however, if you come this way, you will find a bed of some sort or other, and a heartfelt welcome. And so, my dear Sir, committing you and all your concerns to the great and wise Disposer of all things, I beg you to reckon me among your faithful and affectionate friends and brethren in Christ Jesus.

Chelwood, Dec. 17.

My very dear Friend,

Indeed you need not make excuses for not having written to me, for I constantly feel how very deficient I am in all epistolary duties, as well as other duties, (the Lord mend me!) but especially how deficient I have

been in not accounting to you why I did not put in execution my purpose, and I may add my promise, of visiting you for two or three days this summer. In truth I found it impracticable. It must therefore be reserved, under God's will and providence, to the next summer, should we live. In the mean time, let us be present with one another *in prayer*; there let us meet at the throne and fountain of all grace and blessing; there let us hold communion and fellowship (by a soul experience,) with the Father and with the Son, through the Spirit, and *know* that we have access *together* by one Spirit to the God of all mercies and comforts. Let it be our employment, night and day, to draw down strength and power into our souls for that holy service we are both engaged in, and true desire to give ourselves up to it, through the ever open channel of prayer—open without question to every humble and contrite soul, and only open to such; and may you and I know, my dear Friend, that such are *we*, by an increasing sense of our own emptiness on the one hand, and on the other of the *fulness* there is in Christ. While we draw water out of that well of salvation, we shall have enough to drink ourselves, and also through infinite mercy to give to others to drink. O may streams burst out in a desert world, and the parched and waste lands become a pool! I have no doubt, my dear Friend, that something good is sprung up in the heart of dear Mrs. ———; and I am greatly obliged to you for the proofs you mention of it. There can be no better proof of it than her lamentations of backwardness and coldness of heart. They who are cold and backward, really never know it. There *is*, indeed, a very common way, among *confident professors*

of religion, of *talking* after this manner, while they walk as the *world* walks, and sink their Christianity into mere *sound*; but when the *life and practice* speaks—when Christ is really imitated in humility, charity, activity in doing the will of the Father, readiness to bear burdens for others, and *patient continuance* in well doing, then we know that our complaints of ourselves are sincere and genuine; then we may be assured that we are increasing in spiritual life and grace; for the more we advance that way and clear our ground, the more shall we see to be still cleared, and all the while the more unclouded will our view be of the *entire* redemption and justification that there is in Jesus, and the fuller our delight and comfort in that view. Then, methinks, are we *established* Christians, when we see the necessity and feel the pleasure and freedom of working with all our faculties and means for God and our neighbour, and having done all, can heartily say, we are unprofitable servants. This contributes nothing to the glory of God's grace in my salvation; it cannot profit *me*, it cannot profit God in *that* light; I have been able to do it only through Christ strengthening me; and if I had not found *him first* as my Saviour and complete Deliverer, I should neither have been able nor willing to give him these testimonies of true affection. Now these testimonies I trust and firmly believe your dear wife does really unite with you in giving, and that she is daily becoming more thoroughly furnished, upon this blessed ground and principle, for every good word and work. I think I see you devising together how to honor Christ in his poor members, how to give joy (if I may say so,) to his infinitely large heart, how to prepare

yourselves for that last gracious declaration, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these little ones,—of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Keep yourselves, therefore, my dear friends, for the elevated pleasures of humble unostentatious services to Christ. Let not your imaginations carry you to services not providentially appointed you, but serve him in his own way, and above all, "keep yourselves *unspotted from the world.*" Believe me, in the surest and strongest bonds of affection to you both,

Ever yours, &c.

Chelwood, October 1, 1814.

My dear Friend,

Whether I shall get through this winter, is known only to that wise and good Providence with whom all our times are; and whether if I do, I may have a more favorable season afterwards than this summer has been to me, is equally unsearchable. But this I can sincerely say, that my love and regard for you would be a sort of wings to lift me over *common* impediments in my way to you, if another summer's sun should shine upon me. In my way home through Wells, I halted for a couple of days at the Dean's.* I do not know whether you are acquainted with him, but if not, I wish you to be, for he is a most upright man with God. He has no reserves or shiftings about him at all. Simple, humble, and direct in his proceedings, he really adorns

* The late Bishop Ryder.

his station, and I have no doubt will be the instrument of much good in it. He is a very *laborer* for his Master, and let us pray that God may send many, many such into his harvest. I am glad, my dear Friend, you have made acquaintance with Lady —; she too is one of whose sincerity as a disciple of Christ there can be no doubt. Her charming manners have struck you: I endeavour to put *them* out of the question, when I make an estimate of her state and worth; but that is difficult, for she is one of the most agreeable creatures I ever met with. She should be more quiet than she is, or, I fear, will be, both for the good of body and soul. Religion will not flourish in a bustle, and amidst perpetual movements, unless *duty* leads us, and we have the best reasons for not being stationary. It strikes me that *restlessness*, and a seeking out for some other situation than that in which we *are*, is a prominent defect in the beauty and consistency of the character of very many even of the real ministers of the gospel in the present day. They move without sufficient warrant, and because they are not immediately gratified in seeing such fruits of their ministry as they wish; so that they never stay long enough in any place to watch and cultivate the growth of religion in the souls of their people. Thinking as I do in this respect, I was glad to hear no more of a scheme you had in contemplation a good while since of a chapel at Bath. Providence has now given you another church elsewhere, and one that seems to be much more properly in your way, presented by your own father, and in which you have a family interest. * *

*

*

*

*

Yet let us “take heed, and beware of covetousness, forasmuch as a man’s life consisteth not in *the abundance of goods he possesses.*” Let us pray above all things to be preserved from a *worldly mind*, which is the very *bane* of religion, which must ever choke the good seed and render it unfruitful. For a Christian who is supposed to have his thoughts and views towards heaven, and who professes to have his treasure there, to be grovelling in the love of worldly things, and intent upon acquiring them beyond a due and necessary proportion, is such a *prodigious* contradiction, that one would think it must strike the common understandings of all such that they cannot be Christ’s true disciples; and especially if they be *ministers* of that religion which every where so insists upon spirituality, and the restoration of the soul to its dominion over the fleshly appetites and every worldly principle. What is the Spirit promised us for, but to refine us from this miserable dross, and purge out our secret longings after earthly enjoyments and the means of procuring them? The Holy Spirit is the very greatest gift that Almighty God can bestow upon his creatures, because it enlightens their minds to discover their true interests; it gradually weans them from the love of transitory and imaginary wealth and pleasures, and prepares them for the possession and enjoyment of the pure and genuine wealth and pleasures that are at God’s right hand. Hither then, my dear Friend, let our views and thoughts be chiefly directed, and let us be jealous over ourselves in every accession of temporal things, and in the uses we make of them. Let us lay out and lay up something out of them for eternity, (as I trust you do and will do,) and may God

multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness to his own praise and glory.

My dear Friend, I wish you and all that belong to you every blessing. I pray most heartily for you in your public character as a teacher of religion, that you may truly and faithfully feed the flock of Christ; and that in your private and domestic character and experience, you may have the true *comforts of religion*—abiding peace and cheerfulness of soul, and a holy full assurance (by the witness of the Spirit to a work of grace upon your heart,) that you *are* among the number of true believers, and belonging to that flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. I have no doubt of it at all, and *you* ought to have none. Go on and prosper then in the strength of the Lord God, and make mention of *his righteousness only*. I am, with true and sincere regards to Mrs. ———, and every good wish and prayer in behalf of your dear children, my dear Sir,

Your very affectionate friend and brother.

Chelwood, August 8, ———.

My dear Friend,

*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*

The weather has changed for the worse; had it continued steadily *warm and dry*, I think I should still have attempted the journey to you; but it is incredible what a difference I find in different seasons and atmospheres. Therefore, when winter comes, I suppose I

must sink under it. This, however, ought not to engage my thoughts or cares. Let the "morrow take thought for the things of itself, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." If our busy inquisitive minds could but be prevailed upon to leave the future in God's hands, and apply themselves diligently to present duties, looking up to *him* for a blessing, and neither trusting to our own strength or wisdom, how happy and unencumbered should we be. This is the true posture of a Christian's mind; but when I think how perpetually my mind is warped from this *strait* upright posture, I am apt to question whether I am a Christian at all; and yet I have, from time to time, the witness within myself so clear and unclouded, that I cannot mistake it. Thus I am kept in a state of humiliation, but never of distrust in God's mercy. I do commit my soul and body to him, and I do know that he is able to *keep* that which I have committed to him *to that day*. Ah! my dear Friend, that *heart-union* with Christ, you mention, is the thing. It is all in all; for though we understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and had not *charity*, which is the very essence of this heart-union, we should be nothing. I verily think and believe you have it, and I also believe you are active to cultivate and *keep* it up. You cannot be better engaged than in Bible Society business, a business and pleasure united, which my infirmities cut me off from. I have hastily shut up my letter, as I have also hastily written it, not to lose the post; and am, my dear Friend, with the truest esteem and affection,

Yours, &c. &c.

Chelwood, Sept. 25, —.

My dear Friend,

Your letter ought to have been replied to sooner, full as it is of Christian friendship and brotherly affection. But I have done with apologies; for indeed I write to people when I *can*, and when I *cannot* write, I think of them and pray for them, and am thus truly engaged in their service. It gave me great satisfaction, I assure you, (for I kept it in mind that your dear partner was expected to be confined about this time,) to hear that it was safely over, and that God had blessed you with another child. May all your children be *his* children, and grow up to be a comfort to their parents, and a credit to the Christian name. But while God gives with one hand, he takes away with another; and I find, by a report from the papers, that he hath so dealt with you. I fear it is too true that you have lost your father—a dear and a kind parent, I dare say, (from the little I could apprehend of his character by a very short personal acquaintance) and a good tempered liberal man in every relation of life; charitable, no doubt, in the world's view of charity; what more, I know not, nor must you, my dear Friend, suffer yourself now minutely and anxiously to enquire and consider. Rather consider, if you saw no particular change in him, or marks of grace previous to his death, that he and all of us are, and ever have been, in the hands of God, who disposes of all with divine and perfect, but unsearchable wisdom, and will judge righteous judgment concerning every one of us; nay, hath committed all judgment to the Son of his love—that loving tender Saviour, who experimentally

knows our nature, because he took our nature, and therefore will, in every case possible, temper judgment with mercy; and perhaps, in many cases, sees a something in the heart which we do not; and a change within, imperceptible to our eyes. There let us leave it, and quiet our souls and spirits with this comprehensive reflection and act of faith, that *the Judge of all the earth* will infallibly *do right*. His is a most holy and unerring will; and let us simply pray always that it may be done. Let us do *what* we can, and *while* we can, to help *all* we can, and then, with a perfect acquiescence and trust, leave all events to *him*. O that we *could* do so! What comfort would it not ensure us in all cases whatever? What could invade our peace at any time, if we were so *staid in our minds upon him*? Let us learn this lesson from every event. And may God, my dear Sir, be your comforter concerning your father, and concerning the family that are left, and make you a real comforter to them all, in their present trouble.

As to your letter, my dear Friend, it was comfortable to me in every thing that related to yourself. You seem firmly settled among your people, and a blessing from God attends it. You *do* see fruits from your ministry among them, and reap fruits in your own soul, such as I am persuaded you would not have had elsewhere, had you left them. May they be increased tenfold. And let us pray, that whatever God does with us both, we may never be permitted to fall into a worldly *slumber*, (as you express it) on the one hand, nor into a *waking* pursuit after spiritual popularity on the other. Let us be active in duty where God has placed us, for

his honor and glory, and not our own, and for the good of his church and people, in whose enlargement and advancement his glory is so much concerned. When I include *myself* in these wishes and prayers, I must be understood as having no prospect whatever of resuming active duty in the church. "*I am shut up*, (as Jeremiah says,) I cannot go into the house of the Lord;" I can only commune with God in private, and prepare to publish some things I have in hand, which nevertheless are likely to be cut short by death, which I continually pray to be prepared for, but am conscious I am not in that state of meetness and ripeness for which you suppose. However, let us bless God for all things, and that we have any good hope, through grace, of acceptance with him. The past summer has been *untoward* to me; so that, had you *not* been prevented from receiving me by the situation of your dear wife, I could not have come to you. May God bless you and your dear wife and children with every temporal and spiritual good gift. May he make you sensible of the *full possession* of Jesus Christ, and then you have all things. *All things are ours, if Christ be ours.*

Ever affectionately, and I think unalterably yours.

FOUR LETTERS TO ———.

[The four following letters were addressed by Mr. Whalley to an amiable and accomplished young man, who was harassed with doubts and difficulties upon some of the doctrinal points of Christianity, and who was also

inclined to augur unfavorably of his religious progress, in consequence of an over scrupulous disposition. The morbid feelings engendered by this disposition were augmented by the depressing influence of an insidious and protracted malady, against which his constitution struggled for some years, but which finally cut him off in the flower of youth, in spite of the utmost efforts of medical skill. His ties to life were peculiarly strong; but the patience with which he endured the ravages of disease, and his resignation to the Divine wisdom and will, either for life or for death, proved from time to time the triumph of his faith over the strongest human attachments. Mr. Whalley manifested a deep and most affectionate interest in this young man's welfare; he contributed much to his spiritual comfort and edification, both by correspondence and by personal intercourse; and finally had the happiness of witnessing the perfect peace—nay, the celestial joy—with which he welcomed the approaches of death, through faith in his Redeemer. Not long before his departure, he administered to him, under circumstances of peculiar interest, the “holy Communion.”]

January 18, 1811.

My dear young Friend,

That I have so long kept your valued and interesting letter by me unanswered, may seem to lay me open to the imputation of inexcusable inattention; but the real truth is that I am seldom in a state to write important letters, and *very* often am obliged to break off and leave them in the midst, from an infirmity of nerves. I have also had for some time past many more interruptions than usual; so that, whilst *thinking* of you not a

little, I have not found the right opportunity of *expressing* my thoughts to you. But now I hope I shall be able to do so at some length, and I shall trust to your Christian kindness for pardoning the delay. That you have been exercised with difficulties and doubts, and with much perplexity of mind upon the great subject that engaged you, with many fears, and a great disposition to despondency, is an experience common to you, with many others, though perhaps a scrupulosity and timidity that are somewhat peculiar to you, may have greatly contributed to this bondage. Undoubtedly we had need all examine well into the grounds of our hope, and whether we are in the right way, and what has hindered our comfort in it. But yet, when taking scripture for our guide, we are conscious of our own sincerity, and believe God's faithfulness in what he has declared, we should simply follow that blessed guidance, and not hesitate at every step, as if there were a snare laid for us, since that would not only render our progress extremely slow, but quite uncomfortable, and the way of religion to *us* would *not* answer the description given of it—"that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace." The convictions you first had were, I doubt not, from the *good* Spirit; and the ineffectual attempts you made to profit by them, were such as we more or less all make, till more light comes into our minds, and we have further help to see the futility of laboring in our *own* strength. God exercises us awhile in this way for our *good*, but we generally exercise ourselves in it still longer to our *harm*; his purpose is to bring us, by experience, out of self-dependance to depend solely on Christ. You were

deeply in earnest, you prayed, you laid strict plans, you resolved upon carrying them into execution, yet seemed to make no progress: you were reduced almost to despair; and why? Because, though the Spirit of Christ was at work upon you, he was not yet revealed and manifested to you in all his saving strength. Now had you, as you observe at this time, conferred confidentially with some that were experienced in religion, your way to peace might have been greatly shortened. However, the circumstances attending your dear sister's death were a help to you; and certainly you took up a very good helper in Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*. Yet here again your own scrupulous mind, with the help of the tempter working upon it, prevented your deriving the full benefit of such a guide. You were afraid where no fear was. That book, well studied, would have shewn you that your corruptions would continue to molest you, and to *prevail* too, till you should find a remedy for them in Christ, who is "made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption." He would have delivered you from these trammels, and I trust *has* done so in a degree. You did, however, experience, from this period, a growing advancement. Yet you still doubted of many things, and were clouded in your views of the Saviour; and let me tell you, my dear young friend, that this remains the case with us long after we have caught a sight of him *as* a Saviour. But you afterwards became painfully perplexed about the union of the divine and human nature in Christ, (a mystery probably that the angels understand not); and you were not, as it appears, well grounded in the *faith* of his *divinity*. You

saw him as a Mediator, and desired to lean on him as such; but no wonder you could not do so effectually, while you were uncertain to whom you were committing yourself, to whom you were praying, and what indeed was the dignity of his nature, and the extent of his office. Yet you are an instance, as indeed we all are, of the tender pity the Lord has for our errors and weaknesses, our perplexities and prejudices; for even under these insufficient views of him, your prayers seem to have been answered, your faith in him seems to have been accepted, and his love was shed abroad in your heart. A peace and joy, you say, were felt to overspread your mind, which not only continued but increased, and at length your burdens were taken off. The scriptures were opened to your view, which before had been a sealed book, and you applied to them with delight and profit. A saving view of Christ is always attended with light, more or less, and with love of the Bible; salvation by the gospel and gross ignorance of its scope and aim are incompatible. But we are not taught the whole truth at once. The sun does not get into the zenith in an instant. The progress of natural and spiritual light are analagous, and therefore there is no wonder that you did not all at once comprehend or understand the offices assigned to each of the persons of the Godhead in the plan of redemption. You did what was, in your situation, of more consequence; you "rested entirely on Christ for the pardon of your sins, and were sincerely determined to live to the glory of God." Now, my dear young Friend, had you gone on thus simply resting upon Christ, and keeping your eye upon him as "*the way, the truth, and the life;*" as "*the Son of God*

with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead;" had you steadily committed yourself to his grace and power for every thing you wanted, your mental views would have been gradually and pleasantly enlarged, you would have sooner and more clearly seen the nature and extent of the gospel salvation; you would have understood that it not only delivers from guilt and fear, but from pollution, from inclination to sin; that it first renovates the heart and then the life; that it puts us into a new relative state with respect to God, so that we can pray to him with acceptance; and that while it daily fits us more and more for his service, it enables us stedfastly to rely upon his gracious promises to bring us finally to his kingdom and glory. But instead of thus looking to Christ continually, you turned your eyes too much upon yourself; you began to be entangled with your corruptions, and employed in looking back upon the past, instead of rejoicing as one delivered from the bondage of corruption and translated into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. You forgot the gospel and returned to the law, and spent yourself, as you say, in lopping off the branches instead of drawing nourishment and grace from the root, that is, from Jesus Christ. Every thing you did bore the stamp of this self-righteous spirit; and your prayers were dead and ineffectual. You formed plan after plan in your *own strength*, and of course found them abortive. And though you have since been roused to more vigorous prayer and calling upon God, and your views have been more distinct than they were, yet you say you have remained too much in the same self-righteous spirit; and indeed, it is plain enough that there is still a degree of bondage upon

your mind. Thus (I had almost said) invincible is our bias towards a legal justification. Thus, after we have attained to *liberty in Christ*, do we still entangle ourselves with the yoke of bondage. The scriptures, which were written for our learning, give us the most pregnant instances of this tendency; and the epistle to the Galatians was wholly directed against it. The apostle treats them as a sort of *bewitched* persons, who, *after* they had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, (that is, the gospel, the doctrine of *faith in Christ* for acceptance with God) could yet look for any thing spiritual or holy, by the works and righteousness of the law; nay, he is so amazed at it, that he begins to think he had bestowed upon them *labor in vain*, in short, that a true work of grace had not been wrought upon them.

Now then, my dear Sir, gather instruction and warning from all this, and resolve, by the grace of Christ, to get out of these mazes that your natural disposition to doubt, and the enemy's suggestions, are still throwing in the way of your upright comfortable walk with God. Why will you not attend to your *own experience* in this very matter? you say, "you always find yourself best with regard both to comfort and sanctification when you can most realize *faith in Christ Jesus*." Look to nothing then, I beseech you, *but to Christ*; consider him as the Author and *Finisher* of your faith; *trust* him that he will bring the work to a good conclusion; but do not for a moment doubt that it is *effectually* begun, that is, that you are in a *justified state*, and accepted of God; and this is the answer to *one* of your questions, and indeed the most material. In what way

(you further ask) are you to be demeaning yourself towards God? in what language to address him? Why, my dear young Friend, in the language of a beloved child to a father, with humble, holy confidence, in a full persuasion that he will hear you and help you always, for Christ's sake; plead that name in faith, and what bar can there possibly be between your soul and God? Are you ignorant still of many things? Christ by his Spirit will be your teacher; he will make you to understand wisdom secretly. But what would the most perfect illumination do, except shewing you the holiness of God and your own unholiness, unless Christ had *righteousness* for you also, unless you could see him as your deliverer from the curse of the law by having borne it for you, and your justifier by his own perfect obedience. And yet this would not do for a soul sensible of pollution by sin, if Christ were not further a sanctifier. But Christ is all this to his people; all this, my dear Friend, is laid up for you in him; therefore use it by a simple humble faith; keep clear of embarrassments, and of looking back to times of ignorance and sin. We are but imperfectly, and very often, slowly, sanctified. The seed may be planted, but time is still required for its maturity. As soon as we perceive ourselves guilty creatures, and breakers of God's law, and can lay hold of Christ by an act of faith as the *fulfiller* of that law, and as our surety and representative in the covenant of grace, relying exclusively upon *his* merits, and the promise of God to justify us *freely* that way, then we are justified; it is an act of grace, full, sufficient, and complete. Our deliverance from the power of sin is also provided for in

this blessed method of grace, by the *hatred of sin* now excited in the soul by the Holy Spirit, as being hateful to that God who hath so redeemed and delivered us, and quite contrary to the new nature communicated to us; for "*how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?*" Whoever is born of God cannot sin willingly and grossly. Though *the old man* is not absolutely destroyed, nor will be, till we put off these bodies of flesh and blood, you must not therefore be perplexed and troubled nor expect to be *literally complete in Christ*, but go on your way rejoicing and looking to *him*, and stretching forward in faith and hope. As to the directions for *conduct* and *employment* which you do me the favor to ask of me, I should refer you to the gospel itself, where the *spirit*, *conversation*, and *behaviour* of Christians, and *all their duties*, are so beautifully and strongly painted, that nothing is wanting but our diligent, humble, cheerful attention to these blessed directions. Scarcely in any situation can we want employment for the glory of God; and though you are confined by ill health, you can devise liberal things, and cultivate the graces and fruits of the Spirit, and particularly submission to the will of God. You can shew the light of the gospel even within the walls of your house, and breathe out the love of it in your domestic circle. Undoubtedly you may and ought to be helping others in the great concern of their souls, with an appropriate modesty and holy caution. It will be the very way to have your heart *more enlarged* towards them, for all grace increases by exercise. But then, my dear young Friend, you must do this and every thing as in a state of *liberty and plenteous redemption*

in Christ; for how can you recommend him and his gospel, and shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into light, if you are not properly sensible of your own happy state, but still discover to those who should be edified and encouraged by you, that you are in doubt and fear about every thing you do. Read every good book that will elucidate the doctrines of grace and salvation. As to the *Bible, the book of books*, why not read it *through* as a *whole*, praying humbly and with affiance to God to shew you the connection of it, and how clearly the same religion and the same Saviour shine throughout it, beginning at the dawn and rising to perfect day; but look only for Christ in it, and do not puzzle yourself with its difficulties, nor meddle with the peculiarities of the Mosaic covenant any further than as it typified Christ, and an heavenly Canaan after a world and wilderness of sin. Do not be tedious and formal in prayer or any duties. Your enlightened conscience will admonish you, at the close of the day, of any thing that has been materially amiss. Be humbled for it, and wash it away in the fountain of Christ's blood, and so lie down in peace. When you next write, tell me of your health. Accept my prayers, and believe me

Your faithful servant in Christ.

Chelwood, February 20, 1811.

My dear ———,

I have let slip more time than I intended without thanking you for your very kind remembrance of me,

by your present of rusks; and I do assure you they were not only acceptable as coming from you, but particularly suited to me, as being something to take with tea, or by way of supper, that is quite innocent, and at the same time pleasant and agreeable. Your brother says he hopes *you* do not mean to tempt me to give *routs*; yet you may tell him that I really have had more ladies with me than usual, and that at tea they enjoyed this additional luxury of your furnishing, and not without being informed to whom they were obliged for it. If my former letter was of any service, comfort, or instruction to you, I have to thank God for it who works all in all. If we could but, more simply than we do, desire to glorify him, our work of every kind would be more delightful to ourselves and more beneficial to others. I would persuade you, my dear Sir, (for I can do it conscientiously,) to think not only, as you express it, that there is *to be*, but that there *has* been a great work performed on your soul. It was the opinion of one of the holiest and most favoured servants of God in these latter days, that the evil propensity of recurring to our own righteousness, and leaning upon that in some way or other, is the very last thing that quits us, and perhaps never quits any of us but with life. You should not then suffer it to be such a *misery* to you that you would fain do the same thing, or judge yourself to be in a wrong state on that account; for while you have an increasing sense of your own nothingness and corruption, together with that of the *value of a Saviour*, what is there that should hinder your peace? If you only saw *yourself* and *not* the Saviour, then you might well be troubled and desponding; but you know

he is our peace, because he is our *righteousness* also, our *sanctification*, our “all in all.” Pray that you may see *clearly*, my dear Friend, upon what footing it is we are saved by him—not by works of righteousness which *we* have done, but by works of righteousness which *he* hath done—not by *our* merits and obedience to God’s whole law, but *his*. He became our *law representative* and surety; that is, if we can but *trust* ourselves to him, and anchor our souls upon him by *faith*. It is *this*, according to the scriptures, that gives us an interest in him, and nothing else in the world; and it is for want of seeing this simply and clearly, that so many trembling souls are kept in bondage, still endeavouring to free themselves the wrong way, and to get relief by a more perfect obedience; but were their obedience ten times more perfect, it would still be *imperfect*, and quite destitute of any *justifying* efficacy. It is here their error lies, that they confound *justification* with *sanctification*, and would assign to this last the office belonging to the first, that of procuring us peace with God, and consequently comfort in our souls; whereas it is *faith in Christ’s whole merits*, without any thought of our own, or previous progress in holiness, that makes up the breach between God and us, and gives us a full title to his covenant mercies. Lay hold of them then, my dear Sir, in this way *firmly*, and account yourself saved *by grace, through faith, absolutely*; and the more absolutely and exclusively you discover this to be *the truth*, the stronger motive will you have to all holiness and right obedience. The very Spirit by which a clear discovery is made to us of Christ, in the plenitude of his power and grace, is the Spirit of holiness, therefore we may be

sure that a sanctified obedience shall never be separated from a sense of *free justification*. It shall follow it in the same order that the superstructure in a building rises upon the foundation, or as the fruit is produced by the tree. Bend your prayers and endeavours, then, for a more *direct, unmixed, unclouded faith* in God's promise to *accept and justify you only* for Christ's sake, and in Christ's *all-sufficiency* for that *very purpose*; and let not the tempter puzzle you in doing this, or frighten you from such a simple reliance on the merits and righteousness of *another*, as if it were presumption, or could lead to an indifference about a *personal* righteousness—that cannot be the case with any *sincere* soul: “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” On the other hand, shall we fear to *accept* God's grace, and draw our comfort and peace from his free way of saving us, for fear of being charged with presumption, or a leaning to self-indulgence? If any such charges are made, the answer to them is, “It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, and ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Who shall separate us from the love of such a Saviour? or what motive to holiness can be so constraining as the thought, that when we were dead in sin he died and gave himself for us, and then rose again for our *perfect justification* from all our offences against the holy law of God?

I am glad to hear you say you gain flesh and look better. I trust it may please God to restore you perfectly; but put it into his hands, as indeed I doubt not you do, and remember that if you can trust him for

your frail temporal life, you may well and firmly trust him for the life of your soul; and that, as a believer in Jesus Christ, he cannot *forsake* you, or suffer you to perish. May the blessed Lord be with you, my dear Sir, to assist, succour, and comfort you against every enemy and every fear! which is the hearty affectionate prayer of

Your faithful servant and friend, &c.

Chelwood, Sept. 13, 1811.

My dear Friend,

If it were not that I know the benevolence, the candor, and what is much better, the *Christianity* of your heart, I should scarcely hope for your *acceptance* of a letter from me, thus late and after all your kind attentions, at least till I had *fully* explained the circumstances that occasioned such a long silence; yet to do this would now take up too much of our time, and therefore, in few words, I shall say, (what it took me many weeks to suffer, and *many, many* prayers, to be enabled to suffer submissively,) that I was not, during all this time, in a *capacity* to write letters to any body; such, I would be understood to mean, as could give any pleasure or convey any comfort. In one word, a disordered body rendered me useless and fruitless to every body. I am now, I thank God, wonderfully recruited, and have been longing for a whole morning at my disposal to write to you, which, though I have been disappointed of, yet I shall not defer it longer, because I foresee other and greater interruptions, but will give

you such a letter as I have at present time for. When I thank you, as I most heartily do, for your care of me, in the many good things you have sent me, I must blame you for the most distant supposition that I could take that in ill part which was intended with such a *thoughtful* kindness.

Your letter, which was sent me to Henstridge, was a very comfortable one to me, though I had not then the power to tell you so; nay, it was almost such an one as I could have *wished* to receive from you. You are much more clear and unencumbered in your views and feelings of the salvation by Christ, of its *freedom*, and *fulness*, and *sureness* to the penitent and (though perhaps tremblingly,) believing soul. You speak with more confidence (as you ought,) of your being numbered among God's dear children—those blessed souls that have been redeemed to him by the precious blood of Christ, as “of a Lamb without blemish and without spot;” “who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for us, who by him do *believe* in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.” You see then, my dear Friend, that the scripture here, as every where, puts the matter upon our *believing* the promise of God to receive and accept us and justify us *absolutely* on account of the price paid for our souls by one whose payment was *in full of all demands*; whose body, soul, and life being without blemish, and whose obedience to the law perfect,—perfect through suffering as well as doing,—there *can* be no condemnation to those that are *in him* by a *real fiducial reliance* upon him as a Saviour; since he not

only was given for our offences and raised again for our justification, but also ever liveth to make intercession for us. Having performed the whole of his engagement, and become an all-sufficient surety for us, and still pleading with the Father the blood of the covenant for his people; what is there, what can there be, to prevent their salvation through faith?—faith in *Him*, and faith in *God*, who set him up first upon the cross as a divine *expedient* and *ordinance* for that purpose, and then exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, and to send down that blessed influence from on high, by which we are convinced of sin and repent of it, and so receive a full remission:—“*To give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins.*” Thus we see *our hope and trust* is in God every way, not at all in ourselves; we are freed for ever from that bondage of working *for* salvation; we put no trust (as the Church of England expresses it,) in any thing we do, but our trust is in God our Saviour, and what *he* has done; found *in him*, we are found righteous, completely so, though in ourselves, even the best of us, we are still miserably defective; yet not so defective but that we walk “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” United to *him*, (which union is *by* the Spirit,) it cannot be but that we should be upon the whole spiritual persons; holding perpetual war with sin, (a conflict *you* are very sensible of,) and never yielding a willing submission to it. In short, our sincere desire is to be holy, and holy we are and shall be, and shall go on to be more and more so, till at length we are removed to a state of perfect holiness. Now what a delightful freedom does all this give us (while it absolutely secures our sincere, unreserved obedience,)

from the pains and entanglements and scruples that would arise in our minds, (and which you, my dear Friend, have too easily admitted into yours,) in consequence of *our* sadly defective works and ways! These scruples you have certainly not yet got rid of; but I think I now discern them giving way to clearer apprehensions of God, and his grace to us in Christ Jesus. Though you still fear *deception*, still fear *presumption*, and still incline too much to the view of the iniquities of your life, as you term them, and the corruptions of your heart, yet you do not, I think, (and indeed *must* not,) put your *safety* or your *peace* so much upon the footing of your own attainments in goodness as you used to do; "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, *through our Lord Jesus Christ*." Let me intreat you then, my dear young Friend, to resolve (in the strength and grace of God,) to throw away your scruples, or rather, your *scrupulous disposition*. Do not be so perplexed about every step you take, as if your good and gracious God had laid a snare for you in it. Satan indeed lays snares enough, and one especial one is, the infusing these very scruples into timid, humble souls. But while you are conscious of sincerity, take the joy and comfort of it; and though your goodness should *still* seem to be as the morning cloud and early dew, that quickly disappears, and is soon dried up, yet there is a power from above, by which it will be replenished and renewed; and be assured that God will not withdraw that grace from you which he has positively promised to those who, like you, know how much they want it, nor *suffer his faithfulness to fail*. And, let me add, after taking notice of this doubting, hesitating

spirit of yours, and of the evil of it in the great point of your acceptance with God, that you are bound to guard against it in all the *lesser* matters of duty.

Your readings I much approve of. *Scott's* is an excellent Key to the Scriptures, and a very *practical* one : he never loses sight of an *actively charitable, useful, and sanctified* walk with God. As to *Archbishop Leighton*, I really think that if the scriptures were *not* to be had, and it was allowed me to possess one only person's writings, I should prefer his to those of all the world. Go on and prosper with him ; while he shews you all the beauty, strength, and comfort of the covenant of grace, he will make you in love with good works, and afford you the brightest example of holiness in his *own* character that has appeared since the apostolic times. For the *present*, at least, my dear Friend, I have no power to fulfil your request for a morning and evening prayer ; but if God gives me *health*, and that soundness of mind and intellect which I never have *without* it, I may hereafter gratify you. But I have a growing repugnance to the display of my poor performances ; and besides, how many books of prayers are there, all better than mine could be, and suited to all occasions and cases.

Courage, *courage!* my dear Friend. Though you fight with *Satan* and fight with *sin*, you shall be *more* than conqueror, through him who loved you. I rejoice to hear that your health is rather better : your freedom and peace of mind will still further help it.

Your servant in Christ, &c.

Chelwood, December 12, 1811.

My dear Friend,

I have not written to you so soon as I otherwise should have done, because, having had a long personal conversation with you, I was enabled to say every thing in the way of comfort and encouragement that my mind and judgment could suggest, and I am sure I may add my *affection*; (which is very sincere towards you) and I do hope that, through mercy, you have been enabled to keep some of those arguments in mind, and to combat with them against the doubting suggestions of your own mind, which is so apt to perplex itself with groundless scruples and fears. I say *groundless*, for though I would be the last person in the world to infuse into you high notions of your attainments in religion, yet it is my duty to set forth the tender mercies of God to all that would come to him through Jesus Christ, in the strongest and most decided manner, and to show every humble timid soul how gracious he is, and how absolutely mistaken we are, when in such a situation and state of dejection, we do not *anchor our souls* upon his promises in the Saviour. Surely, my dear Friend, as the Spirit of the Lord God was upon Jesus Christ when he gave him his commission to heal the broken in heart, when he anointed him to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that were *bruised*, (galled with the fetters of sin) so we trust it is by the help of the same Spirit, and with a similar commission from Christ, that *we* announce the comforts and blessings of this most blessed gospel to all who thus feel their want of them; to all who, being heavy laden with the chain of

their iniquities, do desire nothing so much as the very Saviour we proclaim. Why then, under such circumstances, will they still hang off, and as it were refuse their own mercies, by suffering any shadow of doubt or difficulty to interpose between them and their peace, between them and him who is their peace? If you *yield* to these temptations and inquisitive fears, you will be kept in a sort of bondage. And if to this we add the harm that will be done to others by the unfavorable impression of a religion thus clouded and overcast, instead of clear and serene, and the real concern it must give your friends to see you in this state of discomfort, I am sure you will see it to be your duty, both to God and man, to shake it off. Something we *may* do, nay, every thing, through Christ who strengtheneth us. Therefore, let your prayers be directed to him for his *especial help* to throw away all gloom, all questioning about the *reality* of your humiliation and penitence, and simply, *as you are, advance* to Christ, and throw yourself, by faith, into his arms of mercy, once for all. But you, unhappily, *argue against* such a confidence as this in your letter; you pronounce yourself in an *ignorant, dark, and hardened* condition of soul; thus writing bitter things against yourself, which have no foundation, *believe* me, (and I here speak as an accredited, though undeserving, minister of Christ) but in your bodily weakness and disordered temperature of the animal fluids. The *enemy* of souls also takes advantage of this, perhaps, to harass you. But do you not see, my dear Friend, that you increase this very evil of a disordered body, by giving way so easily to its impressions upon your mind; and that you hereby hinder

your recovery of health? What an additional argument then is this, for a simple undoubting act of faith in Christ, such as may set your whole soul at ease, and so put you in a condition to attend with *success* to the poor body. Sorry was I to see you look paler and rather thinner when we last met. But really, with those conflicts of soul you experience, concerning a point of such infinite consequence, as the truth and sincerity of your repentance and your acceptance with God, I cannot be surprised at it; how *should* you be on the recovery under such circumstances? Whereas, if you would but trust to holy writ as to what it says so clearly of the power and grace of Christ, if you would but give a little more credit to the experience and opinion of your spiritual friends and of *me*, the most unworthy among them, as to your *meetness* for the reception of this grace, then how changed would the case be? Whatever it might still please God to do as to your bodily health, your *soul* would assuredly find health and peace, and your spirit be rejoicing in God your Saviour. And let it still be so, my dear Friend, that whether you live you may live unto the Lord, or whether you die, you may die unto the Lord; so that living and dying you may be his. And you say (which is indeed true) that as to life or death, or health or sickness, "the wisest way is is to leave all in his hands," who does all things wisely and well. To acquire this wisdom, this *meekness of wisdom*, (as St. James expresses it) this *quiet acquiescence* in the will of God, when ours run contrary to it, is undoubtedly a high attainment, and, as you say, hard to *flesh and blood*. But is any thing too hard for *the Lord*? therefore cast your cause and care upon *him*

who *careth for you*, and who hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And observe, my dear Friend, upon the subject of the conformity of *our* will to God's will, that it is supposed (for, alas! we know it too well) that we *have* a will of our own, yet if still we check it and overcome it, and say heartily, *thy will be done*, it is all that God expects of us. You seem to suppose *that* there is a *strictness* in God to mark what is amiss in trifles, which is the cause of your continual questioning and perplexity concerning every step you take, and even every feeling you experience; but surely *our Father* is not such a God as this; "He knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust." Did Christ take our nature upon him, and subject himself to our infirmities, to *condemn* us for them? O! have done with such ideas; and while you humbly confess your infirmities and sins, *believe* that he is faithful and *just* to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Believe that you are washed and cleansed and justified *in Christ Jesus*; and finding yourself thus *identified* with him, you will at once apprehend *that* sanctification by his blood, which is your *real* and *perfect* sanctification, and go on to have *that* sanctification by his Spirit, which is your personal righteousness; and thus you will be sanctified and justified both before God and men. Do not then, I pray you, should you get *lower* in health, (which I pray God may not be the case) set it down as a sin that you consult for the body in such gratifications as you can and ought to have for it, but thank your God and Father that you are in a situation to have every such indulgence, and let them be the materials for praise to God.

So also in your readings or recreations of any kind, give glory to God for *Christian liberty*, which I verily think you will never abuse. And thus, my dear Friend, I pray God to be with you, and to give you his peace, and keep you in it. Let me hear ere long, by a short note from somebody, how you are, and believe me

Yours, &c.

TO THE BROTHER OF THE GENTLEMAN TO WHOM
THE FOUR PRECEDING LETTERS WERE ADDRESSED,
WRITTEN AFTER ATTENDING THE LATTER IN HIS
LAST HOURS.

Chelwood, January 11, 1812.

My dear Friend,

Being now got home, and in a situation to reflect without interruption or distraction upon the occurrences of the past week, I find I have great reason to be thankful for them, and am indeed full of comfort. Heavy as the dispensation which has taken away your dear brother from us is, (I mean to our weak flesh and natural affections,) how can we do otherwise than rejoice at the thought of the glory that is now revealed to him, and the heavenly rest he has arrived at? It has pleased the Father of mercies to shorten *his* pilgrimage, and rescue him early from a world "that lieth in wickedness," while *we* have still to struggle with it; *his* warfare is accomplished, *ours* continues. Who that from above looks down (if such a view be permitted,) upon the *happiest* lot of the righteous here below, but must pity them in the comparison with him who is now altogether and

every way righteous; who has *found* that state of sanctified perfection which he was breathing after here, and has *for ever* found it. Had he still lived among us, he would doubtless have been favored, as we are, with seasons of sunshine and cordials of grace; but the ever-flowing *rivers* of pleasure and everlasting sunshine are not to be enjoyed but where he is. There no cloud shall ever again interpose between him and his Redeemer; his sun shall no more go down, and the days of his mourning are ended. Therefore, my dear friends, (for I speak here to your whole family,) let *us* not mourn, but bless and adore that God whose ways are all perfect, and cheerfully address ourselves to accomplish the things he would have done by us, till *our* time shall also come. Only let us all take care that the one great thing be accomplished, the one great work of God, *the work of believing* in his Son Jesus Christ—the work of coming to God in his own way, and then walking with him in his own paths, and by his own rule—the work of casting ourselves upon the Saviour's merits, and washing ourselves in the Saviour's blood; receiving and trusting to the atonement and to nothing else, and yet living and acting as if our own penitential humiliations and renewed state of obedience were our only security. In this manner did *he* receive the atonement, and in this manner let *us* receive it, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, as a testimony that our hope is such as will never make us ashamed. "This," said he, as we were listening to his words of divine peace and love, "this is the joy of the Spirit:" and can we doubt it was so? You and I, who were witnesses

to it, and to the tide of love and affection that rose in his heart at the time, and flowed out from his lips, can have no doubt about the source from whence it came. Nay, our own hearts accorded to it, and told us plainly that "there is one body, and one spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all." Let us then be thankful that the seal was thus sensibly set to his soul that God is true and faithful to his promises. That this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide unto death, and that this precious soul was so favorably and with so little pain disentangled from the body, is another cause of thankfulness, though now, indeed, of no consequence, except to put us upon reflecting how weak we are after all, in laying any very great stress upon circumstances of this sort, (which are but for a moment, whether easy or painful,) when we know them to be the prelude to an "eternal weight of glory."

I hope, my dear Friend, I shall soon hear from you that you are all in a state of peaceful resignation under this trial, and that neither your father's recovery has been retarded, nor your mother's health impaired by it. The book he designed for me I shall consider as a treasure, which indeed it is. As to any thing else, under all the circumstances of the case, I would wish to decline it. "Is it a time to receive money, and garments, and olive-yards, and vineyards," &c. at the risk of any imputation of our simplicity and sincerity in doing God's *work*, when every eye is upon us, and every soul is as it were interested in our *disinterestedness*? I have a thousand times wished that I had a moderate subsist-

ence of my *own*, that I might feed the flock of Christ without remuneration. Yet even *here*, perhaps, there is a lurking pride; so that we hardly know what to wish or pray for as we ought, unless in that broad comprehensive prayer, to be inclined to that which will most *honor God and edify one another*.

Lastly, my dear Friend, let me beg you to seize upon this occasion to renew your resolutions to lean at *least* but lightly upon the things of time and sense, and not to expect more from them than they are capable of; for what can they do for us, independent of the enjoyment of God? The very best love of the creature is but the shadow of his love; and how great is the danger that while we are pursuing the shadow, we may lose the substance! Yet we must *act*—yet we must form relations, and both taste the pleasures and do the duties that arise from them; only let us remember the end—the short continuance of all these things; and let every instance of mortality that is brought home to us, like the present, abide in our minds, to moderate every thing that is excessive there. May God keep you from all evil, and bless you with all good, is the prayer of

Your faithful Friend, &c.

TO A LADY ON THE DEATH OF A NEAR RELATIVE.

Chelwood, March 4, 1815.

My dear Madam,

I must and will (a wilful word) sit down at length to make some sort of reply to your letters, particularly the last, which dwells upon a subject you could not but dwell upon, the death of ———, which the more I

reflect upon the circumstances of, the more I am persuaded was a blessed one. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, (the Spirit assures us of it) for they rest from their labors. Labor and sorrow are indeed the portion of the mere children of this world; they toil and heap up riches. And what will riches do for us? What could they have done in the case before us, had there been nothing *better* to repose upon? O! foolish and unwise, to set our hearts upon and sully our minds with that which cannot help us when we most want help, but will rather clog and hinder us from laying hold on the great helper, and *in him* possessing the true riches. What a mercy! what a comfort then for you to think, to know, that your dear relative got fairly rid of this clog and hindrance, shook it off, and rose above it; and, in spite of all its deceits and enchantments, which would rivet us to the earth, *found out heaven*. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,”—for *Jesus Christ*, (that is) for the knowledge of his name and great salvation, that name which is above every name, and which, when *truly* known, is the *wisdom, righteousness, and power* of God. All that can be imagined of excellence and beauty, goodness, grace, and truth, are centred and perfected in *him*—and what is more, placed there for *us*—are attainable, in a *measure* at least, even now in this corrupt and sinful world, by those who would aspire at real excellence, by those who would have their eyes opened to the really sublime and beautiful, by those who truly desire to be good and to do good, and to whom grace and truth appear valuable above all and every thing the *world* has to offer, or *man* to display and shine in. By these

happy souls all the graces and excellences that are in Christ, in truth, a *portion* of his own divine nature and spirit are actually acquired; and yet in such a way as to preclude all boasting, all self-approbation, all assertion of our own merits and eminence above others; nay, rather, on the contrary, not only to humble us before God, but even to cast us down by a comparison of others with ourselves, and as you say, my dear Madam, reduce us to *nothing*; for then it is that we feel most deeply our own *nothingness*, when we most surely perceive what Christ has done for us, and what Christ has endowed us with, and when he becomes in our souls *the hope of glory*. What wonders of grace and love are these in which God has abounded to us in Christ Jesus! and how ought we to abound towards *him* in thankfulness and gratitude, and all the duties of genuine obedience! How ought we to study his will, to look into his word for the rule of it, and to delight in being conformed to his very image in it! There we see Christ crucified for us sinners; there we see the perfect pattern of faith and patience and humility and charity—Divine compassion, that would not let a guilty world be lost—Obedience, unlimited, to the Father's will. And yet we think it much to crucify *our* will in any thing, and to take up our little crosses and *follow* this Redeemer. Well, there is still *mercy for us*. He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are but dust, and so contrives every thing for us, as to *turn* our very weaknesses into strength, our very troubles into comforts, and our rough places into plain and straight paths, by which at length we reach a city of habitations, and find rest for ever. If it were in *our*

hands and management, oh ! what work should we make of it ! We should undoubtedly be for keeping here below those whom he calls up higher. We should be content that heaven were scantily inhabited, so we had our numerous society upon earth, and would perhaps make up our minds to that mixed state which the best of us are in, rather than be called to a purer and more perfect one, if we might but have all our friends conceded to us and continued here too. But we ourselves may see how wisely God sees otherwise ; and although it is more difficult to discern why he takes eminent *helpers* and *protectors* from his church here below, and often in their apparently most useful progress, yet the event generally shows how short and incompetent our calculations are of his grace and *power*, and how easily he repairs and infallibly carries on his own great work and design of building up a church for eternity. Nevertheless, we cannot but deplore, and ought to deplore it, when God removes our shining lights and active associates, and to consider it always as a reproof and warning to ourselves. We valued them not sufficiently in the *right sense* ; we followed them not with constancy ; we wrought not with them as diligently as we might have done. Let us therefore gird up our loins and address ourselves, when we hear of these losses, these chasms in the Christian world, to supply them and fill them up as well as we can, and institute a *fresh* inquiry why we have not already shone more and done better. But I must stop my hand, being already gotten to the extent of my paper, and I may say to the extent of my strength ; for, though I am wonderfully recruited, yet writing much at a time, I find, hurts me. I have

hardly space left to thank you for the basket of good things. It will give you pleasure to hear that the oranges have been *very salutary* to me. I was not aware there were any to be had yet. Believe me ever

Yours, &c.

TO MR. ———, THEN IN ITALY.

Chelwood, March 7, 1816.

My dear Friend,

Not very long after I wrote to you, I received yours to me, and shared your delight at the scenes you have passed through. But the finest scenes in the Alps are really not to be described or imagined. They must be seen, and even then, as you say, seem often a vision rather than a reality. A man with health, and strength, and *genius*, might indeed spend a length of time among those wonderful works of God, and make charming studies from them; but for want of knowing the great Work-master, their best effect (that upon the *heart*,) is usually lost. Indeed I have not yet seen any of those sublime landscapes well rendered, either upon paper or canvass. The truth is, that professed artists want to be getting *money* too soon, and do not give themselves time to finish these things upon the spot; so that they lose the real native effects and exact characters of them, which no memory or fancy *can* carry away, so as not to fall vastly beneath them. I doubt not you have done what you could, *en passant*, to bring away some of those surprizing views; and if I live till you return, I may one day see them; and yet, to make visits or receive

them is become almost too much for me; so that the wonders and beauties of the Simplon may be denied me even though I should remain some time longer in this world. But (blessed evermore be God for it!) there is a world whose beauties and glories as much excel those of this lower world, as heaven is above earth, as incorruptible things are above corruptible, as pure and undefiled inheritances are superior to gross and material ones, such as ours are here, *all* infected and tainted as they are with sin, either in the acquisition or possession of them, or both; and what is best of all, no quarrelling about them, no envying or evil eye, no coveting of them to ourselves, or fear that our propriety in them should be lessened by another's participation. Oh! it makes one melancholy to think of the evils and miseries attendant on worldly possessions, and again on the evils and sufferings *they* are subject to who have nothing *at all* of their own. All, indeed, would be remedied, were we all real and genuine Christians; I mean in respect to grievous bodily wants, and the suppression of vile selfish affections. But we are a fallen race, and now things are just in the right state for those that are *recovering* from that fall, and for proving that their pretensions to such a recovery are well founded. What a recovery will it indeed be, when the unencumbered soul shall spurn all these vanities, and mount up to the realities and substantial eternal joys of that glorious patrimony which Christ hath purchased for his people! What a privilege then to belong to him! and how much does it concern us to ascertain that we really do belong to him! and how thankful, how incessantly thankful, ought they to be who have the *witness* of this within them and

without them, testifying to their own spirits and consciences that they are *born of God*, and commending them to every *other* man's conscience who observes their character, as renewed by *his* spirit to love and to good works, and so transformed from what the worldly selfish man is, as to be indeed and altogether new creatures. Neither is it any *small* blessing to be conscious that we live and walk under God's especial eye and protection. You seem to have been sensible of this watchful providence of God over *you*, and express your grateful acknowledgments for it. May the same Providence still guard you!

Rome is a place where the scenery is altogether different from any thing you met with before, and that *can* be met with, I think, any where else. Those long tracts of road within the ancient walls, in which one may tire oneself amidst varying scenes and objects of mutilated mouldering grandeur—fragments of temples, baths, and aqueducts, interspersed with gardens, vineyards, and groves of cypress trees; and every now and then a modern oratory, formed out of some relic of heathen superstition; every stone, almost, of the walls one walks between having some stamp of interest upon it. These things altogether make a strange mixed impression upon the mind—at least, it did so upon mine—an impression of a soothing delightful melancholy, which would now be heightened by considerations and feelings I was *then* quite incapable of. *Religion* would mix itself with all those objects; *God* would be seen among them every where, bringing to nought the pride and counsels of man; and *man* would be seen too, as blind and miserable, and given up to vain imaginations

and foolish darkness of heart, even in his highest state of wealth and prosperity, till restored and brought back to him by the revelation of the knowledge of his gracious *will* and *way*, and made acquainted with the riches of his goodness, wisdom, and power, in his Son Jesus Christ. On the other hand again, I should be scarcely less touched with melancholy, when I surveyed the modern greatness and magnificence of Rome, and saw all those beautiful and now entire edifices and temples, dedicated to the uses of a miserably corrupted, though not wholly false religion—not *wholly* given to idolatry, as was Athens, but really very much so—so that I am persuaded could St. Paul be set down in the midst of it, and witness what is practised for Christ's religion there, his spirit would be almost as much stirred within him as it was at Athens; and he would say to the Romanists, as he did to those heathen, "Him whom ye ignorantly worship declare I unto you." You do not describe your manner of life in Rome, or in what part of the city you live. In *my* time the English travellers were pretty much of a muchness—dragged about by an antiquarian, cheated by picture dealers, and for the rest living in Italy an *English life* with one another. What the customs may now be I know not, but I dare say *you* do not give in to such as you may disapprove, especially that profane disregard of Sunday which used to prevail, a season that might be so happily devoted to God, whose eye is every where, and whose presence and blessing can keep alive religion in the soul, even when shut out from the instituted means of it.

Circumstanced as I am, you will not expect an *enter-taining* letter from me; I should be content if I could

write an *edifying* one: such as it is, accept it, in the name of Christ, and for his sake. In that name I pray for you both constantly, that God may deliver you from all evil, preserve you in health and peace of body and soul, and keep you in his fear all the day long. Life itself will seem but a short day when past, and yet it is all the time we have for preparing for an eternal day; and it ought not to be spent in idle contemplations, but in active unremitted exertions for the good and happiness of men, for the cause of religion, and the glory of God, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Yours most affectionately.

TO MRS. ———.

Chelwood, October 1st, 1816.

My dear Madam,

I was quite delighted to see your hand-writing, for I quickly recognised it; and indeed I knew I could have no other correspondent in Switzerland but yourself and husband. I have not (I own it with some regret) yet treated you as a correspondent abroad, not having written personally to you, though I have always wished and often intended to do it. But lo! now, as you have given me a spur, and also a clue by which to find you, the intention is brought forth into action; and I trust that this will, ere long, reach you. I partake of your joys (I call them such) in the beautiful countries you have visited and are still visiting, for indeed such scenery, such varied grandeur, such sublimity in some parts of your tour, such elegancies and softer beauties

in others, must have had the effect, in your feeling minds, of keeping up a tide of admiring pleasure, amounting to joy. The animal spirits are so excited, the kindest feelings of nature are so engaged, and every thing so concurs, in such ramblings, to charm and elevate, that one hardly knows how to behave or express oneself; it is, in fact, overpowering; and sometimes *silent admiration* best expresses it, and especially if *religious feelings* accompany; and how can they not accompany such enjoyments, such visible evidences of the mighty power and infinite wisdom and large bounty of God? The writer of the 104th Psalm, whoever he was, could hardly contain himself when he thought of these wonders of nature and Providence, and was endeavouring to describe them. The glory and majesty of the great Creator first impressed him, and drew out his soul's praises and exultations; and at the close the same strain of joyful praise is poured out. It is a rapture, but such a rapture as only the devout can feel.—“I will sing of the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet; my joy shall be in the Lord.” If God, who is rich in mercy, hath quickened us into a better than our natural life, and hath opened our eyes to see even natural things through such a new medium as this, let us glorify him for it; and while we taste of his bounties, and survey his beauties of creation, never forget that we have been created by him, in a new and blessed sense, *to love and to good works*. Let us, while we throw our eyes in a kind of ecstasy over such scenes as *you* are now surrounded by, see through them to the *essential* beauties and perfections of God. And let us,

while we rejoice in his works, consider the great master work of all in which all his glorious attributes are united—the provision for our salvation in his dear Son. Here we may behold him *palpably, visibly, and evidently set forth* to us—*God manifest in the flesh*; whereas he hides himself behind his mere natural works, in which, while we see him, yet we see him not. Take care then, my dear Friends, that, amidst all your pleasures and varied delights in that wonderful country you are surveying, you take *Christ crucified* with you, to humble you, and to prove you, whether you do indeed see God wherever you go; whether the raptures you feel be mere animal raptures, or, at best, the gratifications of the intellectual mind; struck, as it may be, with the evidences of God's hand and power in the things you behold, and yet not *spiritually* delighted, or perhaps not by any means in the proportion you suppose; for, in fact, in all cases and circumstances we are prone to deceive ourselves, and take abundantly more credit for sound feelings and principles than is due to us. But taking *Christ crucified* along with us, we shall have a true interpreter of every thing we feel, of every thing we see, a true appreciator of it all. In short, it will come to this, "These are beauties which his kind indulgence amuses us with in our state of infancy. But he does not mean that we should dwell upon *them* instead of *himself*, for *they* shall perish, while *He* shall endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shall he change them; but *He* is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; his years shall have no end. These things then are but a passing vision, a glittering exhibition for a time; and

let us not be so taken up with them as to forget that *Christ crucified* has purchased and prepared for us an infinitely more glorious vision and scenery, substantial, real, and permanent, and adequate to our adult and ripened faculties as heirs of his kingdom. While we are children, we shall think, understand, speak, and see as children; but as we grow up to manhood, let us put away childish things." Such should be our reflections when we are *most* pleased with our *valleys, glaciers, and waterfalls*. Yet, do not, my dear Friends, think me a Cynic, I am only a Christian; and as such I assure you again I rejoice in your joys and pleasures, and think I see you mounted in the full costume of the country, and braving the terrors of the Furca, and charging into the drifts of snow, with a mingled patience and pleasure, and thinking within yourselves of the pleasure of relating all this in quiet and safety by your fire sides at home. What then is the termination of all our labors and dangers?—*Rest, rest* after all, even in *this* world, to sit down quiet at last; and in truth, the sooner we do so, the better; that we may have means and leisure for cultivating God's peace, and ensuring our soul's rest; for long residence in countries where either heathenish ignorance, or gross superstition, or abandoned levity prevails, and where we cannot, in any *settled system of living*, communicate with Christ and with true Christians, is injurious to our spiritual interests. Come home then, my dear Friends, and though *I* am likely to see little or nothing of you for the future, even *when* at home, yet in your sphere and proper station, (if *you* can maintain it properly against the *world*) you may make your light *shine to others*, you

may dispense blessings around you, and feel blessings within you, such as only *can* belong to us in *the path and course of duty*. Thus I quit you as travellers, to say one word of myself as *stationary*, till I travel into another world, and take a journey to see wonders that eye hath not yet beheld. Here I am where you left me, and here I have been *all the summer*. I bless God that I have been tolerably well, and that I am now, for *me*, quite so, but still, of course, growing weaker and weaker; and always very liable, from the nature of my complaints, to be taken off suddenly. Wishing and praying for you all, with all affection, and trusting in God that he will still protect you, I commit you to him, and am ever, dear Madam,

Your faithful friend and servant.

FIVE LETTERS FROM MR. WHALLEY TO HIS SON, THE
LATE REV. R. T. WHALLEY.

Chelwood, May 26, 1800.

My dear Richard,

The spring has been a very charming one, and doubly comfortable to me, as I am not in a very complete habitation, though in truth I find the little room I occupy a warm one, and have not taken the least cold by my removal from Wells. I have not the whole cottage, small as it is, at my command; for the good woman and her husband and daughter who lived in it are still there, and do for me what I want to be done,

to the best of their abilities.* But my difficulties will, I fear, commence when you come down, for I see little prospect of getting my own cottage in order by that time; workmen run away and disappoint me, and the main operations are not yet set about; but I will exert myself as much as I can, and I think I can make it comfortable enough for a single person. The difficulty will be to find *you* a sleeping room, and provide for servants too. The garden would be pretty, if in order.

You ask me if I think the Bishop would accept *my* curacy as a title to orders for you: I suppose he would, if I continued to serve Clutton. If you wish to adopt this plan, I intreat you to qualify yourself as well as you can for the important office you mean to undertake. With respect to historical matters, dates, and difficulties of time and order in the divine writings, much human assistance may be wanting; and knowledge of the original languages is very desirable; and if I were young as you are, instead of old and worn out, I would unquestionably make myself acquainted with the Hebrew. But, after all, the only method of understanding the scriptures, is to enter on the study of them without preconceived opinions; looking up in prayer to God for the assistance of an infallible interpreter, even the very Spirit by which they were dictated. All the learning upon earth without this, would leave you a poor blind critic, *striving about words*. I wish you could read the New Testament thus, whether English or Greek, merely determining (if you *can* so determine)

* A cottage which he inhabited while the parsonage was preparing.

to be led by the analogies of language, the plain import of words and phrases, without at all considering the seeming strangeness of the doctrines you would find there. Do the scriptures *contain* these doctrines?—do they preach the *Trinity*?—do they preach *original sin*?—do they preach *despair* to all who would be justified *by works*, and *confidence and sure acceptance* through the law of *faith*?—do they preach *conversion from the old man*, the old corrupt nature, to the *new nature and new man*?—do they set forth *faith* simply, as the purifying *principle* of this change?—do they preach *divine illumination* and *help* to bring it about, and to *give* this faith, *through the word*?—do they authorize us to think and believe that they who are thus changed must be *sensible* of it, and feel the comfort of *knowing* in whom they have believed, and what they have escaped from?—do they preach sanctification and holiness as *consequent* to faith and *growing out of it*? or do they (which is the absurdity we are so prone to adopt,) call upon you to perform all holy duties and become a new creature without any *means* of becoming so? for until you have faith in Christ, uniting you to him, and making you a partaker of his divine nature, and giving you *his* strength to perform holy duties, it seems to me that a creature fallen in sin can never have the least hope of performing them. You will not recommend it to a poor diseased cripple to work as if he were a healthy strong man; but set him upon his legs, and restore him, and then you may justly require and expect him to labor for you. Till *we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, we can never perform them. These things I know are *either* openly exploded,

or laboriously controverted by all manner of tortuous reasoning, or dexterously mixed up with sleepy drugs, to destroy their animating power. But let it be remembered, that the world knoweth not Christ, receiveth him not, and that its wisdom is *foolishness* with God. For God's sake think of these things; examine them without reference to my opinions, or those of the persons who think differently, but seek for an unprejudiced opinion at the fountain head, and may God enable you to arrive at it. But if you only apply to the authority and opinions of *one* set of persons, it is easy to see that you do not really seek for truth. God bless you! write soon to

Your affectionate Father and Friend.

Chelwood, June 29.

My dear R——,

I am pleased at your determination to prolong your stay at Cambridge, as it will enable you to read with less interruption, and with greater assistances of books than you would meet with here. O may you have that teaching and assistance which can alone throw effectual light on all other teaching, and dispose your heart and open your eyes to the truth. If you will look into the Offices for Ordination, you will see that the agency of the Holy Ghost is expressly acknowledged and solemnly applied for there; and how it comes to be made so light of, or rather absolutely denied, by many modern Christians and Christian ministers, I leave it to them to account for—they must

one day account for it: and I would only have you at present not set your face against that very power and divine influence, (as if it were a visionary thing,) which is to enable you to understand the gospel, and understanding, to practise it; for the doctrines and practice of Christianity are inseparable—the one necessarily lead to the other; and they who would attempt a holy practice without first obtaining a holy faith, are beginning at the wrong end, and rowing against the stream: their house is built upon the sand, and in time of temptation they will fall away.

Adieu, my dear R———; write soon to

Your affectionate Father.

Chelwood, Tuesday, 3.

My dear R———,

I was going to write to you from Wells, but afterwards thought it would be more satisfactory to you to hear from me after I reached home. I came away from you in great comfort, and much assurance that I left you in the hands of God, in an *especial and blessed sense*. Though a weak believer in the gospel, yet I find myself so much a believer in it, as to rejoice more over you in your present state of mind, than if I saw you in possession of the whole world; for the world will pass away and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass; but “the word of the Lord endureth for ever.” *That shall stand*, whatever else falls, and therefore let nothing tempt us to fall from our faith and stedfastness. Many are the arts, both of men and devils, that will be practised against us, when we are perceived to have

embraced the truth, and rightly to believe in him who *is the Truth*. Wonderful is the hold that the world and the people of the world have upon us after all. We had need to watch and to pray, and not conduct ourselves too confidently. True grace is a heliotrope, turning itself to the Sun of Righteousness, to catch some of its beams, in whatever situation it be planted : it cannot live without them—at least, it cannot open its flowers, and make that show it should. Christ himself tells us that our light is not to be *put under a bushel*. This should be remembered by all Christians more than it is, and especially by Christian ministers, for *they are the light of the world*, and when that *light is darkness*, (which is too often the case,) O Lord, *how great is that darkness !* It is not, therefore, enough that we believe rightly, and rest there, and having got *ourselves* into the place of safety, remain indifferent and unmoved at thinking how many poor souls there are who have not (in a spiritual sense,) “where to lay their head.” No ; we must arise and be *doing* something for them, as God shall give us the power ; and God *will* give it, if we wrestle for it in prayer. I pray God that you may find out the pleasure and honor of serving *him with your spirit in the gospel of his dear Son*, so as to lay yourself out for the spiritual good of those committed to you, and *give yourself wholly to these things*. If we do it but partially, we shall do little good. Our poor, neglected, ignorant fellow-creatures are yet *not* so ignorant and inapprehensive as not to see that a minister of Christ should have some of his Master’s mind and manners, and should not be like other men, but be a sanctified character, and as much as possible separate from

sinners. The vulgar have unreasonable prejudices, and expect of us, in some things, more than is essentially necessary for our doing them good; but we must pity them and humour them, and so endeavour to be *all things to all men, as by all means to gain some*. Again, there are none so ignorant as not to know that Christ pleased not himself, but made himself of no reputation, emptied himself of all proud consequence, though not of all authority; and among other reasons, for this, that he might familiarly introduce himself every where, and by his kind condescension make himself personally acceptable, in order to pave a way for the acceptance of his word and doctrine. But this is a very different thing from an indiscriminate idle mixture with vain irreligious persons, and seeking our pleasures and amusements among them. The only way to have true pleasure and happiness in the most indifferent things, and the most moderate means of enjoyment, and the humblest society, (if thrown into it by him,) is to look *for God* every where. Is not this evidently proved in the case of those who in the midst of all their worldly advantages do *not* consider him? Do we not often see the fondest schemes of those who are eagerly pursuing wealth, and power, and luxuries, terminate in poverty and disappointment, or else in vanity and vexation? If God give not his blessing, all the conveniences and accommodations in the world will be sapless and fruitless to us, and *with* his blessing the least things will content and give us pleasure. It is the judgment of God upon base ungodly minds, that they have no real enjoyment of all they possess; and it is his blessing upon his people, that “having nothing they possess all things.” We need not,

therefore, lay a stress upon a great situation, or much advancement in the world, for we have all things if Christ is ours.

But now I ought to give you some account of myself. After we parted at Mr. N.'s, I got up pretty early in the morning, and went to Somerton, Mr. N. riding with me. I afterwards went to Illon, and examined into the condition of the church, which, though I did not find as I wished, yet in a much better state than before—the outside very neat, and the chancel repaired and ceiled, and new communion rails, &c. The Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer are *promised* to be put up, and all the pews mended, and the pulpit and clerk's desk to be moved and put in order, with new pulpit cloth, &c. by October. I breakfasted Saturday with the Bishop and Mrs. B———, who enquired after you: they were without any company, and both looking well. I had a difficulty to get hither Saturday evening, for the whole day was uncommonly wet; however, I did, and found all things in order, and the people glad to see me, and I think sincerely so, by their coming to me Sunday evening in great numbers, high and low, as far as that may be said of the ranks here. This gave me true pleasure, and will be a spur to me to go on and quicken my pace and exertions, and may God prosper it. My love to dear E., with thanks for her kindness to me, and so God preserve you both.

Sidmouth, March 13, 1810.

My dear R——,

I see, by the date of yours, that I have neglected answering your letter much longer than I intended, or was at all aware of; but time moves rapidly on, and thus even the youngest will be brought, before they are aware of it, to the verge of eternity. Sorry should I have been had that little blossom of yours, I mean your dear boy, been nipped so early; and yet we often know not what we wish for, when we wish those little ones to live and grow up. While we take the utmost care of their health and life, let us withal take care, as far as we can, to bring them up in the fear of God, that their life may be a real blessing to themselves and us, and terminate, after this pilgrimage, in the unspeakable felicities of life eternal. Blessed be God that he has preserved all your lives, and mine too. In the mean time let us cultivate resignation to the Divine will, which so many people talk of without having the least idea how it is to be obtained. It is evident to *Christians* that none *but* Christians can have it; for how is it possible to give up creature or worldly comforts *willingly*, and as God would have us, unless we have first found out their *vanity*, their *insufficiency* to satisfy us, and bring genuine and lasting pleasure? and how is this to be practically discerned till we have discerned Christ, who is *all-sufficient*? *Then* the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, will keep every other affection in its proper place; then, to part with our dearest friends in a real submission to his will, becomes a practicable thing; nay, I had almost said a comfortable thing, if

we know them, at their death, to have been *believers*, and leaning on Christ only; or, in a state of sinless infancy, partakers of the covenant by baptism. In short, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then we believe that them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. And when to this we add the consideration, how short a time it will be before we are all laid in the dust together, and how soon all tears and afflictions will cease with the people of God, it will very much help, at least, to dry up our tears, and make us bow with a holy cheerfulness to the dispensations of God. *Something* of this, I mean to say, will take place with Christians rightly so called, though nature must still have her way in a measure; and with the most of us this, as well every other grace, will be very imperfect; but let us study to make them *more* perfect daily, in a dependence on the Divine promises through Christ, whose blessed will be always done. I continue myself, I thank God, tolerably well. I think I had better make *you* a visit in the summer, in June for instance, when I might have a probability of being able to go out a little. What think you? Let me hear, and whether you have any thoughts of coming this way.

I am ever, &c.

Chelwood, February 22.

My dear R——,

I bless God you got home safely. My thoughts followed you—my affections, I may say, for I am generally a good deal, (nay, too much) *affected* at

parting *with* you; and your last visit was so transient, that my regrets were the more lively. But all this should be conquered; for what is our whole life, and all its enjoyments, but a vision, a dream? it must all soon vanish and give place to realities. The best use we can make of its crosses and trials, is to view them as intended to wean us from this world; to convince us how vain and transitory is our present state; and how satisfying and abiding will be that which is to come, when we shall awake up as from a night vision, throw off our night clothes, (as Howe expresses it) be clothed with immortality, and live for ever in the light and likeness of Christ. Yet while we are here, nature *must* have its *feelings*; and I think, if any excess of them be allowable, it is so in the case of my affection for you. If prayers avail, and I am sure that they *do* avail, loving kindness and mercy from God shall surely follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in God's house for ever and ever.

I trust, in this invigorating cheerful weather, you are quite well; and you will be glad to hear me say that I am so; for, in fact, my cough has left me, and I feel quite strong. I may well say with David, "He satisfieth my mouth with good things." In the higher sense it was meant indeed of a *spiritual* feast; and in this way also I have occasional relishes of good, and taste that the Lord is gracious; nay, I trust *will* be so everlastingly. My pen runs glibly, and I could well continue to write, but eleven o'clock approaches, and I wish to save the post; and so, my dear Richard, with best love to ——— and the dear children,

I am, &c.

SERMONS.



SERMON I.

THE WORLD AND WORK OF NATURE—WONDERFUL AS
IT IS—NOT COMPARABLE IN GLORY TO THE WORLD
AND WORK OF GRACE IN MAN'S REDEMPTION.

Isaiah xxv. 10.

“For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest.”

WHEN the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them;¹ when God had created by his power and wisdom every living thing; and to crown all and be the Lord of all—*man*, after his own image and likeness,² then “he *rested* on the seventh day from all his work which he had made!³ What! was God weary with working? was he tired with his labor, as men are tired with theirs? No; “*He commanded, and they were created.*”⁴ It cost him nothing but the act of his will. “*Let there be light, and there was light;*”⁵ let there be heaven and earth—let there be sun and moon—let there be day and night—let there be land and sea—let the earth bring forth its grass and fruits, and trees

¹ Gen. ii. .1 ² Gen. i. 26. ³ Gen. ii. 2. ⁴ Ps. cxlviii. 5.

⁵ Gen. i. 3.

and herbs, yielding seed after their kind—let the waters swarm with fish—let the fowl fly above the earth, in the open firmament of heaven—let cattle and every beast and every creeping thing be produced; and “*it was so*”⁶—it followed of course. Inconceivable as it is to us, *so it was*; we have God’s word for it, and besides *that*, the testimony of our own reason, which tells us that these things could not make themselves, and *must* have had a beginning from one who neither had beginning, nor *can* have end of days—the infinite and eternal God. He it was then that made us, and all these things, “*and not we ourselves* ;”⁷ and behold! when he had made them—when he had ceased from creating them—he saw that *they* “*were very good*.”⁸ He “*rejoiced in his works* ;”⁹ he *rested* in a holy self-complacency at the contemplation of his own perfections displayed in them. *This* is the rest intended by the inspired writer, not a rest from actual labor; not such a rest as follows weariness, but a discontinuation of his will to do more, joined with a perfect satisfaction in what he had done, for there was no flaw or imperfection in it; all came from his hands complete, like himself; every thing perfectly suited to its end, and the end and design of the whole and every part perfect also.

Here then the *hand* of the Lord—the *mind* of the Lord—the infinite intelligence he displayed in the creation of the world, *rested*, was *satisfied*, for it all redounded to his own glory. This is the proper end of all God’s operations, since *out* of himself God can find nothing, and “*by him all things consist*.”¹⁰ But as

⁶ Gen. i. 7, 9, 11, 15.

⁷ Psalm c. 3.

⁸ Gen. i. 31.

⁹ Ps. civ. 31.

¹⁰ Coloss. i. 17.

God can find nothing *out* of himself, so the creature can find nothing *in* himself; *his* business is, or should be, to glorify God, to see and have respect to him *always*, and in *all things*. And indeed when we look at the wonderful works that he hath done—the earth and lower world, the heavens and higher world, the sun, the moon, and the stars, “*which he hath ordained*”¹¹—one would think that we should every one of us be lost in humble and devout adoration of such a Being; though in fact the smallest insect, or plant, or blade of grass, has as much of the divine power and wisdom in it as the sun or moon; for the sun, that glorious luminary, is necessary to their growth and existence. The sun itself, my brethren, is but the servant of the base weed or worm we tread upon. So that there is nothing great or little, as a work of God, and the whole creation hangs together as one undivided work; as at first produced, so still supported and carried on by him.

Now they who have eyes to see, *do* see this, and they see God every where and in every thing. I am not speaking of philosophers, as they are called, for amidst all their researches, they seldom ascend higher than the creature. Those who thus stop short of God the Creator, cannot attain to a right knowledge of and faith in *him* whose hands have *made* and fashioned “*all these things*,”¹² their foolish hearts are darkened after all, and supposing “*themselves wise they become fools*.”¹³ I therefore have in view those (whoever they are) who have sought for the true wisdom, have perceived their own folly, imbecility, and corruption by nature,

¹¹ Psalm viii. 3. ¹² Jer. xiv. 22. ¹³ Rom. ii. 21, 22.

and have prayed for the great remedy of it all—the *grace of God*. These have eyes to see (however obscure and ignorant in other respects,) the glory of God in his works. They have a spiritual *eyesight*¹⁴ given them, which opens a scene to which the great and learned are too often strangers. I myself have sometimes heard a poor unlettered peasant speak of God and his presence and operations, with a clearness, a knowledge, and a pleasure which would have astonished most of his educated neighbours.

These reflections, my brethren, are intended to lead you to some proper consideration of the glorious power and skill that framed this natural world, and of that great work of “*six days*”¹⁵ from which God “*rested on the seventh.*” Then we find “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”¹⁶ The very angels were amazed, who dwelt in heaven, and were familiar with those glories. And truly these glories of the natural world are wonderful as we behold them, but had we seen them at first, in their original perfection and brightness—had we seen the process by which they became what they were, and the finishing hand, as we may say, put to the whole work—assuredly *we* should have sung and shouted for joy too. It would not have required incitement or exhortation to us, to praise God for his excellent greatness; nor when *he* rested from creation, should *we* have been inclined to rest from giving him glory.

But is there not a work of greater glory still? is there not “a glory that excelleth?”¹⁷ (for to this it was

¹⁴ Rev. iii. 18. ¹⁵ Ex. xx. 11. ¹⁶ Job xxxviii. 7. ¹⁷ 2 Cor. iii. 10.

my principal purpose to turn your eyes;) are there not heavenly things, of which these earthly things are but a faint example and shadow?—a world of *grace*, to which the world of *nature* is altogether subservient? Yes, surely. The present world, as we see it, wonderful as it is, would be but a poor thing, if unconnected with the promised glories of eternity. To be born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,¹⁸ and to go downward to the dust as the beasts that perish, and this going on in endless succession; men coming as the leaves, and like them afterwards perishing, would be but a poor, an unaccountable result; it would neither demonstrate the perfect wisdom or goodness of God. For I have hinted that man is born to trouble, *that*, indeed, is undeniable; he may have many *animal* pleasures, and also gratifications proper to him as an *intelligent* being; but he has pains and troubles innumerable, and peculiar to him as a *social*, as well as *individual*, *thinking* creature; and the very thought of losing what he loves and values, and of incurring what he hates and fears, is enough to throw a bitter into his best cup. And upon the whole, let any of us look around a little into the actual state of things, and consider the *groans and travail of the whole creation*,¹⁹ the aggregate and individual misery there is in the world—mankind being in innumerable cases reciprocal haters and plagues of one another—and shall we not be brought to this conclusion, that the all-wise and good God could not have made things thus at the first? Shall we not begin to think that the world must be a degraded, fallen

¹⁸ Job v. 7.

¹⁹ Rom. viii. 22.

world? Shall we not acquiesce in the scriptural declaration, that "God made man upright, but that he hath found out many inventions;"²⁰ and that it was Sin which brought death and disorder, and all manner of evil, into the fair creation of God?

Here then another world commences—the world and work of *Grace*, in which God says, as in the first creation, *Let there be light, and there is light*. On that day when man apostatized from God, "behold darkness and sorrow"²¹ came upon the earth, and guilt, and fear, and shame. There was a *veil* of woe and mourning *cast over all nations*²² for the time to come, which no hand of man could remove; there was a just wrath awakened, which *he* could never appease or avert. Death had been pronounced, and must follow, unless God could change and be disarmed of his attribute of *justice*; alienation and aversion must continue and be perpetual, unless some adequate means of *reconciliation*, as well as of reparation, were found, or unless God could lose his *holy nature*, and love a creature now become defiled and unholy. Who could interpose in such a quarrel, or bind up such a breach? "*Lo! I come,*" says Christ, "*to do thy will, O God! I am content to do it; thy law is within my heart:*"²³ *I* will be a surety for the honor and satisfaction of it; *I* will suffer the death due for the breach of it; *I* will perform the un-sinful obedience it requires; *I* will dignify and sanctify those creatures again that have become unworthy of thee, and put themselves out of thy peace and love: all shall be repaired. But how? Oh! amazing *depth*

²⁰ Eccles. vii. 29. ²¹ Isaiah v. 30. ²² Is. xxv. 7. ²³ Ps. xl. 7.

and height, and length, and breadth, of divine love!²⁴ O that "*love of Christ which passeth knowledge!*"²⁵ never will it be fathomed by a creature. The Son of God consenting to become the Son of Man, and live and suffer and die for sinners!—here is *superabounding grace*,²⁶ where there was *abounding sin*. Grace, observe, brethren, could have had no place or existence but for reason of sin. It could not enter into the first covenant; the notion of it is absolutely connected with the fall of man. Grace *then* took place, when *sin* had entered; and thus was the *kingdom of grace* set up, when that first intimation was given to the now naked and trembling parents of mankind, that God would *put enmity* between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; that the woman's seed should *bruise his head*, and that he, the serpent, should *bruise the other's heel*.²⁷ That is, that the Redeemer, when the destined time arrived, should crush the power and ascendancy of the devil, and should regain a lost world, though at the expence of his own sufferings, in flesh and spirit, and of his death upon the cross.

But many ages were to run out, before this promise would be realized, and this redemption be completed. The light of truth and "*Sun of Righteousness*"²⁸ were to rise gradually upon the world, as does the natural sun. *We* are apt to think and say, why did not God repair the ruin at once? but who are we that presume to dictate to God, or require an *account of his enactments*?²⁹ Yet the truth is, that the ruin *was* repaired

²⁴ Eph. iii. 18. ²⁵ Eph. iii. 19. ²⁶ Rom. v. 20. ²⁷ Gen. iii. 15.

²⁸ Mal. iv. 2.

²⁹ Job xxxiii. 13.

from that day. Faint as the light was, indistinct as was the nature of the redemption promised by Christ, it is justly supposed that Adam and Eve apprehended it, and were saved by it. And we see in the offerings of Cain and Abel, that God had already revealed something *more* concerning the nature of the satisfaction he would require for sin, and that "*without shedding of blood there could be no remission.*"³⁰ Thus Abel's offering was accepted, as a *believer* in the *atonement*, and Cain's rejected, who not believing in the atonement, brought an offering of his own invention, as unbelievers do to this day. Then we see too, how the enmity broke out between the two seeds, in the murder of righteous Abel; and so it has continued, more or less, ever since. It was the case with Ishmael and Isaac; and "*as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so it is now,*"³¹ says the apostle; and so it *will* be to the end of time.

Let us go back, however, and consider how God's hand was still working, in the creation of the world of grace; how one thing was produced after another; how "*Enoch walked with God,*" by the grace of God, and "*God took him;*"³² how "*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,*"³³ when the rest of the world was so corrupt and profligate that the Lord determined to destroy them. Thus a righteous seed was still preserved, and *some* true believers and worshippers found, though few. And now, after the flood, when the utmost confusion and degeneracy prevailed again, God began to open his designs further in the call of Abraham, and to repeat

³⁰ Heb. ix. 22. ³¹ Gal. iv. 29. ³² Gen. v. 24. ³³ Gen. vi. 8.

the promise of salvation to a sinful world in his seed, "*In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"³⁴ But Abraham had no child, nor was likely to have any; yet he believed God, when it was promised him that he should be the father of innumerable children; and it was "*counted to him for righteousness,*"³⁵ that he could thus look forward to the Saviour in his family. Afterwards he was taken expressly into covenant with God, the promise was renewed, and circumcision instituted, "*the seal of the righteousness of the faith in Christ, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*"³⁶ Then it pleased God to try his faith by the command to sacrifice the son and heir he had given him, and at the same time to reveal in that transaction, very clearly and significantly, the sacrifice of his own dear and only begotten Son. It would be long to tell of the other patriarchs, and how the promises were renewed to them, and how God revealed himself to them and *by* them, (especially in that memorable prophecy of dying Jacob,³⁷ concerning the time of Christ's coming and the termination of the Jewish government,) and how they wandered about and sojourned in tents, in the very country that was promised them as a type of a better, "*confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.*"³⁸ The wonderful providence which God exercised in behalf of the persecuted but righteous Joseph, his exaltation as governor of Egypt, the migration of Jacob and his sons to that country, to escape the pressure of famine, were all likewise parts of the great

³⁴ Gen. xii. 3.

³⁵ Gen. xv. 6.

³⁶ Rom. iv. 11.

³⁷ Gen. xlix. 10.

³⁸ Heb. xi. 13.

scheme by which God disciplined his chosen people, and prepared the way for the establishment of the Mosaic dispensation.

*“But when the time of the promise drew nigh, that God had sworn to Abraham,”*³⁹ concerning the land of Canaan, the state of affairs was altered; *“another king arose, who knew not Joseph;”*⁴⁰ he hated and persecuted the now multiplied children of Israel, who, after dreadful plagues inflicted upon Egypt by Moses, to whom God had appeared and given commission for the purpose, were delivered from their cruel bondage there, and set in the way to the promised country. At the execution of the last plague, typical of the great and final visitation for sin, the Passover was instituted, a wonderful representation of the sacrifice of the *“Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”*⁴¹ Wherever the blood of the passover was seen sprinkled,⁴² there the destroying angel entered not; nor was this rite abolished among the people of God, any more than circumcision, until the Saviour himself removed them both, to introduce the sacraments of baptism and the last supper, signifying, however, the same things—*regeneration of heart and nature—salvation and sure redemption from wrath and death.*

In the mean time, by the terror of this last judgment upon the Egyptians, the Israelites, under Moses and Aaron, were permitted to leave the country; and every one knows how Pharaoh, hardening his heart and pursuing them, was drowned, *“with all his host,”*⁴³ in the

³⁹ Acts vii. 17.

⁴⁰ Acts vii. 18.

⁴¹ John i. 29.

⁴² Ex. xii. 13.

⁴³ Ex. xiv. 28.

Red Sea. The signs and wonders that accompanied them in their whole journey through the desert, and the actual presence of God with his peculiar people, to lead and govern and preserve them, can only here be glanced at. The whole history of it is a proof how God proceeded in his work of grace and great design of verifying the *original promise*. On their coming to Sinai, the law was given them, and a covenant of obedience to it entered into; that very moral law, impressed upon the heart of man when God created him, but with the addition of a ceremonial and politic law peculiar to themselves, and a variety of ordinances, all relating to the great redemption looked for, and figurative of the holiness and purity indispensable to a *people of God*. In short, they were here gathered into a church; the tabernacle, with its worship and services, was set up *according to the pattern God had shewed Moses in the mount*;⁴⁴ and still every thing so ordered in it as to prefigure *the true tabernacle*;⁴⁵ still this covenant, under Moses and his mediation, so contrived as to signify and be subservient to the *Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises*.⁴⁶ “*This was that Moses who said unto the children of Israel,*” (another remarkable prediction of Christ) “*a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you,*”⁴⁷ “*a prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken;*”⁴⁸ and it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require

⁴⁴ Heb. viii. 5.⁴⁵ Heb. viii. 2.⁴⁶ Heb. viii. 6.⁴⁷ Acts vii. 37.⁴⁸ Deut. xviii. 15.

it of him." Thus they arrived upon the borders of Canaan, having been all this while miraculously sustained with bread from heaven, and water from "*the rock which followed them*"⁴⁹ through the wilderness, as sacramental pledges of him who was to come,—*the Rock of salvation, the spiritual meat and drink* of his *believing* people. Yet these, being come to the land, "*could not enter in because of UNBELIEF.*"⁵⁰ In consequence of their infidelity and murmurings, they were all cut off in the wilderness, (save Caleb and Joshua) to shew to *us*, as well as to them, the fearful consequences of doubting the divine word of promise, and the *possibility*, even under the *gospel covenant*, of our coming short of *the gospel rest*.

But when these were thus destroyed, and Moses called to be with God, their *children*, under the conduct of Joshua, or Jesus, (an exact representative of the great "*Captain of our salvation,*"⁵¹) took possession of the promised country, and so entered into that *earthly* rest, which was to be the reward of their obedience in the middle and mixed covenant they were then under, and also an image of that *heavenly* reward and rest which *all the faithful* in the *great comprehensive covenant of grace*, thus carrying on to its completion, should surely obtain. How soon they corrupted themselves, and fell from God who had done such great things for them, we all know, and the sad circumstances they therefore fell into; God all the while not giving them up, but, under the judges, still recovering them and owning them till the *kingly government* was established, *the Lord their*

⁴⁹ 1 Cor. x. 4.⁵⁰ Heb. iii. 19.⁵¹ Heb. ii. 10.

God himself having been hitherto *their King*.⁵² For now, by God's express direction to Samuel, (the last of the judges) to hearken to their voice and make them a king, having first set before them their sin in *desiring* such a change, Saul was anointed to reign over them, to whom succeeded *David, the sweet psalmist of Israel*, and the progenitor of the true David, the Messiah himself. God had very particularly pointed out this youth to Samuel, long before the death of Saul, and to him, after he had reigned many years, and was projecting to build a house for God,⁵³ the promise was given by Nathan, that God would build *him* an house, and establish his kingdom and throne for ever;⁵⁴ a promise that David himself and other holy men of God evidently understood in a spiritual sense, and considered to be given to him as the covenant representative of the *Messiah—the Christ*. The psalms appointed by our Church for this day⁵⁵ do, some of them, very clearly prove this; and indeed, not only the whole sense of the Jewish Church was positive for it, but our Lord himself assumes and asserts it; and, referring the scribes to the 110th Psalm, puzzles them with that question, "*How say they that Christ is David's son?*"⁵⁶

Thus was the *covenant of grace* renewed and wonderfully unfolded to David, as designed to be made good in his family; and thus was Solomon, though one of his younger children, named by God to sit upon his

⁵² 1 Sam. xii. 12. ⁵³ 2 Sam. vii. 2. ⁵⁴ 2 Sam. vii. 13—16.

⁵⁵ Preached on Christmas Day. See Psalms lxxxix. cxxxii.

⁵⁶ Luke xx. 41.

throne after him, and to build the temple which *he* had planned and prepared for.⁵⁷ Now therefore was the Jewish church and kingdom at its highest state of splendor; and little could one have thought that David's descendant and offspring, "*that bright and morning Star*,"⁵⁸ so especially signified in all the promises from the beginning, and here alluded to as the eternal supporter of David's throne, would be found in so obscure a condition as he was born in, or that the royal line could ever fall so low. But that so it was, proves the instability of *human* grandeur. From Solomon's days the kingdom was divided into two, and both Israel and Judah, through their idolatries and abominations, declined rapidly, till at length they were overthrown—the ten tribes first, and not long after the two others, Judah and Benjamin. These, however, were restored from their captivity in Babylon, by a most wonderful power and influence of God working upon the hearts of the kings of Babylon. Cyrus,⁵⁹ who was by name appointed and prophecied of before he was born into the world, gave the first order to bring back God's people; who, after their return and the restoration of their temple and city, though they never fell again into idolatry, yet sunk into other abominations; and at length, rebelling against the Roman power, were utterly dispersed and destroyed, and their government put an end to, as was prophecied should be the case, when *Shiloh*,⁶⁰ that is, *our Lord Jesus Christ*, should come.

⁵⁷ 1 Chron. xxii. 9.

⁵⁸ Rev. xxii. 16.

⁵⁹ Is. xliv. 28.

⁶⁰ Gen. xlix. 10.

In the mean time God sent to both Israel and Judah prophets and holy reformers, to bring them back to a sense of their duty, and forewarn them of the judgments that would overtake them if they repented not; still giving them intimations concerning *him that should come*,⁶¹ the great Redeemer of his people, and describing him so exactly in his whole *character, life, and death*, that one would have supposed they had actually seen him in the flesh, and witnessed all that befel him. Nor was his forerunner, John the Baptist, forgotten in those prophecies. And as to the *time* of his coming, the prophet Daniel⁶² had fixed it so plainly, that the whole Jewish nation were looking out for him as that time approached; and prophecy, which had long ceased in the church, was renewed, to point him out and honor his appearance. When he did come, it was in a form so opposed to their hopes and wishes, that they would not receive him, but persecuted him to death, the ignominious death of the cross. Yet these very sufferings of his were the appointed means of restoring us, miserable sinners, to life and to peace with God. So deep and wonderful are God's counsels, so marvellously did he bring about that *kingdom of grace*, which may be said to have been openly set up, if not absolutely perfected, when our Lord was manifested to the world, and published his gospel in it.

The limits of this discourse have obliged me to cut short the many surprising steps by which God proceeded in his great purpose of sending the Redeemer upon earth, "*the desire of all nations*,"⁶³ to whom "*the gathering of the nations should be*."⁶⁴ It is enough to say, in a

⁶¹ Matt. xi. 3. ⁶² Dan. ix. 24, 25. ⁶³ Hag. ii. 7. ⁶⁴ Gen. xlix. 10.

word, as St. Peter said to the Jews, in one of his first sermons, that everything from the first was preparatory to it, that "*all the prophets, from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, foretold of these days.*"⁶⁵ All that was said and done in the history of the people of God, was in order to this event we are now celebrating—the birth of this Child—this "*Son that was given us,*"⁶⁶ whose name is called "*Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,*" "*of the increase of whose government and peace there should be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from thenceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts,*"—(the holy love and will of God to make good his oath and promise from the first, in "*saving his people from their sins,*"⁶⁷) —"*would perform this.*"

And it was and is performed, my friends; this blessed work of grace is perfected; this kingdom, throne, and church of Christ, was set up "*in the mountains,*"⁶⁸ from that day when he came into the world, (though he was to suffer many things afterwards for its establishment); and then and there did "*the hand of the Lord rest,*"—"He rested in his love to man."⁶⁹ As he rested upon the finishing his work of the natural creation, so now he rested upon completing his much greater work of "*bringing in the first begotten into the world,*"⁷⁰ and so, providing for the spiritual creation of an everlasting kingdom, people, and world, when the

⁶⁵ Acts iii. 24. ⁶⁶ Isa. ix. 6, 7. ⁶⁷ Matt. i. 21. ⁶⁸ Isa. ii. 2.

⁶⁹ Zeph. iii. 17.

⁷⁰ Heb. i. 6.

natural world should perish and vanish, and be no where found—He *rested*, I say, in this great act; divine love itself could go no further. His *power*, his *justice*, his *mercy*, his *truth*, were perfectly glorified together in it, and *shall* be glorified in it to all eternity.

Thus have I brought the prophecy in the text, as I hope, to a not unprofitable explanation. Consider a moment the whole passage, and the prodigious things it contains:—“*In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things,*”⁷¹—privileges and comforts unspeakable—ordinances of religion rich and precious, because spiritual, simple, and easily resorted to; and among these the blessed, holy sacrament, *the communion of the body and blood of Christ*, of which some of us have this day partaken. O! that all might come to it, who call themselves Christians, and so come to it as to find it a real feast. “*And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, the veil that is spread over all nations.*”⁷² The dark cloud that covered the world shall be dissipated; God’s indignation against sin and sinners shall be appeased; his favor openly and fully restored; his face shall shine upon them again, for the veil upon their *hearts* shall be removed; the blindness of the heart and understanding both shall be done away, and men shall no more be alienated from the life of God through ignorance. “*He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth.*”⁷³ He

⁷¹ Heb. i. 6.⁷² Heb. i. 7.⁷³ Heb. i. 8.

will triumph over death, and him that "*hath the power of death, the devil,*"⁷⁴ by his own death and resurrection; and thus, by "*delivering them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage,*"⁷⁵ by recovering them from a state of guilt and fear in their consciences, and restoring them to pardon and peace, he will dry up all their tears, excepting those of sweet compunction and holy love; his dreadful and *vindictive* rebukes for sin, shall be removed for ever from his people, and only his *correcting* and *chastening* rod be felt by them — *a Father's strokes*. Possibly the Spirit of God here alluded to the degraded and despised state of the Jews throughout the world in after times, and as it is at this day, and prophecied of their great and final restoration. "*And it shall be said in that day, Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*"⁷⁶

Now *this is that day*, my friends, spoken of by the prophet; the day of Christ's birth and incarnation; the day for which the just and devout souls, under the old dispensation, were continually looking and longing; the day of "*Israel's consolation,*"⁷⁷ as St. Luke expresses it; the day of *the Lord's Christ*.⁷⁸ Yes, *unto them*, and "*unto us was born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;*"⁷⁹ the Lord Jehovah himself; and therefore "*mighty to save,*"⁸⁰ to "*save his people from their sins.*"⁸¹ His people,

⁷⁴ Heb. ii. 14. ⁷⁵ Heb. ii. 15. ⁷⁶ Isa. xxv. 9. ⁷⁷ Luke ii. 25.

⁷⁸ Luke ii. 26. ⁷⁹ Luke ii. 11. ⁸⁰ Isa. lxiii. 1. ⁸¹ Matt. i. 21.

(those that are indeed his) *know*⁸² that he is come, and come for *their* salvation; they *know* that he is the Lord; they waited for him once in a state of great anxiety and suspense, and prayed with earnestness to have him *manifested*⁸³ to their souls. But *since* that season of trial, they have found him "*born to them,*" as well as they *to him*, in a blessed especial sense. This day, whenever it returns, to *them* becomes a happy day, a day of "*good tidings of great joy,*"⁸⁴ even to all his people every where in the world. *They* have reason to be joyful; *they* can and will "*be glad and rejoice in his salvation;*" for "*in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest.*" All is now finished. The Lord himself could do no more for us than to consent to be *made man*.⁸⁵ Of all the stupendous things ever heard of, this is the most so; and of all the stupendous steps the Lord has been taking in the economy of grace ever since man fell, this is the crown and summit. The "*Head Stone*" of this vast edifice is now "*brought forth with shoutings, grace, grace unto it.*"⁸⁶

"*Cry out and shout then, O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.*"⁸⁷
"Let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout

⁸² It is not intended to be asserted here, that all true Christians are alike assured of their interest in Christ; a great deal will depend upon the manner in which they have been brought to him, and more still upon the manner in which they walk with him. But yet none of them can be destitute (unless by a morbid mind) of considerable *hope and comfort*.

⁸³ John xiv. 21. ⁸⁴ Luke ii. 10. ⁸⁵ See Nicene Creed.
⁸⁶ Zeeh. iv. 7. ⁸⁷ Isaiah xii. 6.

from the top of the mountains."⁸⁸ "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himself in Israel."⁸⁹ Thus the Spirit of God, in his prophet, calls upon heaven and earth to rejoice in this great event, and give him the glory of it. Do we, my brethren, know any thing of this joy, indeed? Are we pouring forth our praises for this redemption in true heartfelt strains? Are we the inhabitants of the rock whom the prophet calls upon? Can we shout from the top of this mountain? Are we gotten into it? Are we found in Christ? Can we "*sing of mercy and judgment*"⁹⁰ met together in him?—of "*righteousness and peace embracing each other*"⁹¹ in him? Has he spoken this peace to us? Is "*his salvation nigh unto us*"⁹² What is our experience of it? Has he "*forgiven our iniquities*?" Has he "*covered all our sin*?" Is the face of the covering that was cast over all people taken off from us—the veil removed? Can we, with "*open face, behold the glory of the Lord*"⁹³ Can we, with open hearts, receive and entertain the Lord? Does he come unto us, and visit us, and "*shew us his salvation*"⁹⁴ Has he wiped away all tears from our eyes? Have we ever shed any tears in true contrition for sin? The tears can never be wiped away that never flowed. There may be tears of hypocrisy; there may be tears of guilt, and fear, and shame; there may be tears of sympathy and natural feeling; but tears of godly sorrow and true repentance

⁸⁸ Isa. xlii. 11. ⁸⁹ Isa. xlii. 23. ⁹⁰ Ps. ci. 1. ⁹¹ Ps. lxxxv. 10.

⁹² Psalm lxxxv. 9. ⁹³ 2 Cor. iii. 18. ⁹⁴ Psalm l. 23.

are not common. There may be *joy* too of various kinds, among which the noisy joy of what is called Christmas-keeping is well enough known—“*revellings, drunkenness, and such like.*”⁹⁵ But the holy joy that springs up in the heart from a right consideration and knowledge of the salvation that is by Christ, what do we know of this? God grant we may all come to know it. God grant we may all come to see and admire the hand of the Lord in our redemption, and how it *rested* in this great act of his love, the sending his Son into the world as on this day. God grant that *we* may never rest in any thing, till we find we have an interest in this love of God, by the sense of a reciprocal love to him, by a true feeling of gratitude and devotion to Christ, and steady desire to do him true and laudable service.⁹⁶ And “*let all that love his salvation, say continually, the Lord be magnified.*”⁹⁷

Now, “*to him who is able to do all things for us, above all that we can ask or think, to him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, and world without end.*”⁹⁸ Amen.

⁹⁵ Gal. v. 21.
after Trinity.

⁹⁶ See Collect for the Thirteenth Sunday

⁹⁷ Ps. xl. 16.

⁹⁸ Eph. iii. 20, 21.

SERMON II.

THE BONDAGE AND CONDEMNATION OF THE LAW
ABOLISHED, AND THE PRIVILEGES OF THE GOS-
PEL SECURED TO US BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Galatians iv. 4, 5.

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

IN a discourse I delivered to you, my brethren, on Christmas Day, I took notice of the many surprising steps by which God proceeded in his great design of sending the Redeemer into the world; and that every thing from the first was preparatory to this great event. It was my purpose to make you sensible how far the work and world of grace exceeded in glory the work and world of nature, wonderful as that work was; how far the great mysteries and wonders of redemption outstripped those of creation; and how much more brightly the wisdom, power, and goodness of God shone

in the restoration of a race of ruined and lost creatures, than even in their original formation after his own image. Throughout the four thousand years which elapsed, from the first promise of future redemption to its accomplishment in the birth of Christ, the hope of it was growing stronger, the light of it clearer, the comfort of it more satisfying and powerful; till at length the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings, and all the evils and sore maladies of the human race were now to be more than remedied; they were to be exchanged for unspeakable privileges and eternal blessings.

But as man has, since the fall and first promise, been always for hastening the work of God, and still forgetting that *his* thoughts and ways are not like our thoughts and ways, so has he been prone to mistake the very nature of the redemption promised, and to mix it up with his own fond conceits and expectations. The Jews did this, and still do it; and in one way or other even Christians do it—I mean the far greater number of them. The wisdom of God ordained that the particulars of this great plan of mercy should be gradually developed, and that much obscurity should, for a time, involve it. Its nature was veiled in types and shadows under his first church, and great difficulties occurred even to those that were in that peculiar covenant. Till the day spring from on high was to visit the earth, and the shadows flee away, the things that belong to salvation were but dimly seen. The Saviour might be traced, indeed, throughout the revealed history of the church and of the world, (as Moses, by inspiration from God, had written it) and the eyes of the faithful

could and did discover him there, but not distinctly. They could not see the King in all his beauty; and it may be questioned whether the prophets themselves, who described him so exactly, and spoke with such a holy admiration of his reign and government, perceived altogether that his crown and kingdom were to be entirely spiritual and heavenly, or that they saw with perfect clearness the nature and power of the doctrines they delivered concerning it, and how the *righteousness* and *peace* they spoke of as peculiarly belonging to the Messiah's days, should be brought about, and what was to be the final issue of his appearing. They did not see, with all their anxiety and earnest looking, to the clear end of that which was to be abolished, and which *we* see so perfectly, and yet for the most part so unprofitably. As their covenant was of a mixed nature, with temporal promises and carnal ordinances, but capable of a spiritual application, so their knowledge of the Redeemer's kingdom and righteousness was a mixture too. The believers among them saw, doubtless, enough of the gospel to be saved by it, but still retained too much of the law in their religion, to be in any *great* degree of spiritual liberty. The various ceremonial ordinances they were obliged to observe, were a yoke upon them, which (as St. Peter strongly expresses it in the conference the apostles and elders had at Jerusalem, upon the subject of circumcising the Gentile disciples) neither the Jews themselves, nor their fathers, were able to bear; and therefore, to the very same purpose, St. Paul urges it upon the Galatians, in this epistle, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke

of bondage. Thus, under the Mosaic dispensation, it is undeniable that even the true Israelites were very straitly and uncomfortably confined by the law of ordinances, and knew but little, comparatively speaking, of the law of faith which we preach—that most blessed doctrine of the righteousness of faith in Christ; and that *He* is “the end of the law for righteousness” (both moral and ceremonial) “to every one that believeth.” Thus, (as the apostle says, at the 23rd verse of the former chapter) “before *faith* came, they were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed;” and thus, “the *believers* among them were held in a state of comparative darkness and bondage. Through the promises and ceremonies, *they* received a *measure* of light and encouragement, and looked forward to the brighter day that was predicted; while the nation at large were at least restrained by the institutions and sanctions of the law, from total apostacy.” So that you see the church, under the old dispensation, was in a state of pupillage and minority, and the law was a kind of schoolmaster to prepare it for Christ, to give it such previous introductory lessons in religion as should qualify it for the gradual apprehension and more complete enjoyment of Christ and his salvation, when he himself should appear to reveal it perfectly.

Now then the propriety and beauty of the similitude the apostle uses in the verses that immediately go before the text, is very visible. He compares the former church to the heir of a great estate, while yet a child, who in fact is under as much constraint as a servant, though Lord of all. He is under tutors and governors, till the time appointed by the father for his being released from

them; and must bear confinement and correction too, as they judge proper for his good—his knowledge and liberty both being as yet very trifling. Even so we, says he, we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world, (for thus he calls the Mosaic observances, the burdensome external ceremonies of that dispensation;) or, as he speaks in another place, the rudiments of the world, the first dry lessons of religion, at least as much suited to carnal and worldly, as to spiritual and holy men. Under these were we held and kept, while as yet we were in our minority as the heirs of salvation, and not yet grown to a fulness and meetness, either in judgment or affection, for the pure and spiritual religion of the gospel.

“But (continues the apostle) when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

“To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

Here is, in the *First* of these verses, the great fact of the coming of Christ into the world asserted, and the time and manner of it too, and who and what he was; and,

In the *Second* of them, the ends and reasons of his coming are plainly declared to us.

I shall speak shortly upon each of them; and I pray we may all profit by the consideration of things that are so particularly suited to the present season.

“*In the fulness of time*” then, (to speak to the *First* part of this text,) “*God sent forth his Son.*” “Known unto God were all his works from the beginning;” there is, in fact, no beginning of days or end of life with him;

the past, the present, and the future are to him the same; therefore it is rather with respect to us, and our short capacity, that the expression is used. But, however, when the fulness of the time was come—when the moment was arrived which God in his infinite wisdom had appointed for the coming of Christ—the time which had been fixed for it by prophecy, and when, of course, the Jewish nation were looking out for him, and of which even the gentiles were not wholly unaware; at this infinitely interesting time, which the state of the world made so suitable to the introduction of a new and more enlarged dispensation, “*God sent forth his Son.*”

But why, it may be asked, was it so very suitable? I will tell you in a very few words:—because the former dispensation was, as it were, waxed old; it had answered its end; it had done its duty; it had fully shewn that “had there been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been *by* the law;” but that this was impossible. And it had, on the other hand, shadowed out *the righteousness of faith*, through the atoning blood of Christ; it had *proved* that the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin; while, through those very sacrifices, it had pointed out the *true sin-offering—the Lamb of God*. But a religion of this nature, when no longer accompanied by miraculous interpositions, must in the course of time necessarily tire and grow obsolete, that is, wax old. The spiritual part of it would be swallowed up in the carnal and formal part of it, and at length it would become a heap of formalities, a dead carcase, and without any life or light in it. Burdensome as those ceremonies were, men would willingly enough observe them, in order to

be excused from the services of the *heart*, and the *faith* and *holiness* they signified; and thus, from a state of deadness, they would come to a state of *corruption*. All which the history of the Jews most clearly gives us the example of, and proves beyond a doubt, therefore, that the great end of the legal dispensation was to shew us, that another dispensation was necessary, in which *the Spirit* should be poured out more powerfully, and the Saviour known more perfectly. So that, when under the old one, however famous and glorious it had been, the peculiar people of God, the house of Israel, were fallen to the very lowest point of carnality and hypocrisy, then certainly was the time arrived for raising up the church of God to another state, to a *new religious existence*.

And if in respect of the Jews the time of Christ's coming was so exactly suitable, in respect of the gentiles it was even more so. For while their taste, and learning, and ingenuity, in natural things, were at a higher pitch than had been ever known before, or has been since known, their ignorance in spiritual things, their ignorance of God was deplorable. Their foolish hearts were darkened; their idolatries were inconceivable; and their vices and abominations proportionably odious and disgusting. So that they were at once a proof that the world by wisdom could not possibly know God, and at the same time they were in a state of intelligence and capacity for examination and enquiry, that might have enabled them to detect any thing false and pretended in the religion of Christ, and the miracles he and his apostles wrought to confirm it, *had* any thing false and pretended been indeed in it.

Thus was the time peculiarly suited for the manifestation of God in the flesh, to put an end to the corrupt and superstitious and sad degraded state of the Jews, who sought after a sign, though they would not seek after God; and to the vain pretensions of the gentiles to wisdom, while they were groping in gross darkness as to the commonest things, and fallen beneath the brute animals in sensual and vile affections. It was time, surely, for God to interpose; it was time that the longing expectations of the better part of mankind (for some such there seem to have been, even among the heathens,) should be realized. It was time that such among the Jews as were waiting for the hope and consolation of Israel, should be no longer disappointed; that the doubts and fears of God's creatures should be dissipated, and the groans and tears of a whole world be relieved and dried up. "The fulness of the time was therefore come, and God sent forth his Son."

Yes, amazing act of grace! his own very Son, of the same essence and nature with himself, who was "in the beginning with God," "begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary, and was made man," assumed the human nature into personal union with the Deity, by a miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin, that so he might be born of a woman and be made her seed, receiving his human form of her substance, according to the original promise. Yes!—adorable mystery!

adorable Saviour! thou art the everlasting Son of the Father; and "when thou tookedst upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb;" thou didst consent to be *made of a woman*.

Here let us pause a moment, and pray to God to give us a real faith in this astonishing mystery. Some things are called mysteries, which, when revealed to us by the word of God, are intelligible; though *before* they were so taught us, we should never have conceived them. But here is a mystery that baffles all examination; God and man in one Christ; the Creator of all things himself a creature; the uncreated nature and essence of the eternal God incorporated with the perishable flesh and nature of frail man, or at least *assuming* that nature into itself. Who can understand this? Nay, who can truly believe this, by any strength or power of his own? May God enable us all to receive and believe it in such a manner, as to find that we ourselves are made partakers of the Divine nature, through this mystery of Christ; and that as God was in Christ, so Christ may be in us—Christ who was made of a woman, *made under the law*; who was born and bred under the legal dispensation, and of Jewish parents, (at least reputedly so,) and became subject to the law for man—subject to the whole law, both ceremonial and moral, and that so no jot or tittle of the law might fail of its accomplishment; and that while he taught us the necessity of observing the formal and positive parts of religion as well as the moral, he might in every way, as the Surety of his people, answer the demands of the law upon them.

For this was the great reason of his becoming subject

to the law, that he might be our *Law Representative*; that being under it as a covenant of works, he might do that for us which we cannot do for ourselves, and perform a sinless obedience to it. It was a perfectly voluntary undertaking on his part, for as the Son of God he was not bound to any law. He was himself the great Lawgiver, the source and fountain of all law. And even as the Son of Man, (as it has been well observed,) he was not bound to comply with the *ceremonial law* of the Jews, which in every part of it signified that man was in a state of sin, and which was only contrived for sinners; whereas *He* was without spot or taint of sin, *holy, harmless, undefiled*, separate from sinners; yet it pleased him from his birth to his death to live in perfect obedience to the whole law. He was presented in the temple, and redeemed, as all the first-born among the males were, by such an offering as the law had appointed. He was circumcised the eighth day. He went up to Jerusalem with his parents, after the custom of the feast; and still, we find, continued it, when he was no longer subject to them. He kept the Passover with his disciples, and frequented the temple worship and service; and even submitted to John's baptism, though that was no legal ordinance, and though he had no sin to repent of or be washed away; but "thus (said he) it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." And thus was Jesus Christ "*made under the law*," and in every point subject to it, "*to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*"

Which brings me to the explanation of the *Second* verse of the text. Now under what law, it may be

asked, was this redemption necessary?—the Jewish law only? Under *every* law; the law and light of *nature, reason, and conscience*, as well as the law that was expressly and supernaturally given to the Jews, and further and more spiritually revealed to Christians. For as sin is the transgression of the law, there could be no sin if there were no law; whereas we are told that all have sinned, therefore all have been under some law that condemns them, and are in fact under the same law—the holy, just, and good law of God, which still retains all its claims upon them, though *they* have universally lost their power to act up to it. But even the gentile nations, and every individual of them, who have no knowledge of such a law, except in a few fragments of it, as originally written in man's heart, are condemned by that little they do know of it, and are far from walking by their own rule, defective as it is. And thus as many as have sinned without law, (that is, without a knowledge of the law, as republished from Mount Sinai,) shall perish without law—shall be condemned by the law they do or may know; so that they are still without excuse. And, on the other hand, as many as have sinned in and under the revealed law of God, shall be judged *by* that law; having had a more perfect rule made known to them, they shall be dealt with accordingly.

Thus we find how true it is that the law, under every manifestation and modification of it, worketh wrath, (and where *most* clearly revealed, there *most* wrath,) and that if there *could* be any people under *no* law, *that* people would not be transgressors, or in other words, sinners. But there *are* no such persons, though unhap-

pily there are many among us who are inclined to fancy that they shall not be dealt with as sinners, by God, because they have preserved a tolerably respectable character in the eyes of men. Many, alas! there are, who for want of light in their consciences, or any true desire or prayer to the Father of lights that they may *have* light, are quite unaware of what God's law is, and what sinners they are against it; and so are very ready and resolute to establish their own righteousness, and very well satisfied with their own good works. And yet they read plainly, that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, and that every one who *continueth not in all things* that are written in the book of the law, to do them—who fails in any jot or tittle, or ceases for a moment to be obedient to it—is cursed.

Gracious God! then, how blind must *their* consciences be, who do not bestir themselves to take refuge from this curse in him who was “*made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law* (which, in one sense or other, I have shewed to be all men); who came first unto his own, (though they received him not,) to free them from the yoke of bondage, and redeem them from the ceremonial law, as well as from the whole curse of the legal covenant; and then, in a larger way, to redeem sinners of all nations from the law's curse and condemnation, by bearing their sins in his own body on the tree, by offering himself up on that altar as a spotless sacrifice of infinite value, and so satisfying the demands of God's justice, and taking the curse of sin upon himself.

But the blessing does not rest here, for he was made under the law, “*that we might receive the adoption of*

sons." I have shewn you already in what a state of pupillage the Jews were—as a child under tutors and governors, even the believers among them. Now, whoever of them embraced the gospel rightly, were delivered from this pupillage, this yoke of ceremonial obedience, and from the slavish spirit it produced. They were before in a kind of constraint, shut up unto the faith which was to be revealed; but the gospel set them at liberty in this respect, and they then had all the privileges of adult children. Therefore is *the law of faith* called *the law of liberty*. Whoever believes in Christ as he ought to believe, finds him at once to be a Redeemer from the terrors and threatenings of the law, and yet a real Deliverer from *sin*, supplying us with a principle of true filial obedience, even *love*; and there is as much difference between the obedience produced by the law, and that of the gospel, as between the obedience of a servant and that of a son.

And let not the Christian of the present day suppose that he is not under the constraint of the law, and in a state of real bondage to it, because he can have nothing to do with the ceremonials of Moses, for *we* have our ceremonials too; and, moreover, it is evident that the *moral* law has the same effect of contracting and shutting up the hearts of those who think to be justified by their own obedience to it, as it had when connected with the Jewish ritual. Yes; they are in a real slavery who think to be saved by their own good works or imaginary merits; they can never know they are accepted that way. They can never act with the *liberty* or know the *love* of children; *the adoption of sons* can never belong to *them*. And if there are (as I trust

there are,) many who, though they do not see clearly what the gospel is, and what are its privileges, yet have a *degree* of saving faith in Christ in their hearts, we may venture to affirm respecting such, that their religion has a great deal of fear and of discomfort in it; that in proportion as a covenant of works is still in their minds, or at least a leaning to any *dependence* upon works, *the promise of faith* is hid from them.

But again—*The adoption of sons* would be but a small thing, if it consisted only in our escape from a legal spirit, and superstitious subjection to ordinances. Nay, that Christ was made under the law, to redeem us from the curse of it hereafter, as well as the bondage of it *now*, does by no means comprehend the whole blessing here intended. This is deliverance from an *evil state*, but not adoption to a *blessed one*. *The adoption of sons* here spoken of by the apostle is, in its highest meaning, a glorious privilege, consequent upon our receiving the *Spirit* as believers in Jesus. Adoption makes an essential change in our relative situation with respect to God. We were before absolute strangers to him, disabled from coming nigh to him, and disowned by him; we are now taken into his house and family, and acknowledged for his own very children; we are allowed all the privileges and endearments of children, and the *inheritance* of children is secured to us. For thus reasons the apostle, in the verses following the text, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying *Abba Father* ;” and if you are sons, then you are also “heirs of God through Christ.” Such are the great blessings Christ

came to procure for us. These are the ends and reasons of his being *made of a woman—made under the law*; and I again pray God that we may all profit by the consideration of them. I shall propose to you several ways of doing so.

First, Let us improve the subject before us, by a due consideration of what St. Paul says here to the Galatians, about returning to the weak and beggarly elements of the law. Now, whoever among us are indulging the idea of any *saving* power in mere outward forms and institutions, however valuable or necessary in their proper place, are still, it is to be feared, under the covenant of works. Their *baptism* will not save them; their *ordinances* and *sacraments* will not save them; their *creeds* and *sects*, and *national churches*, will not save them. No, nor their best obedience to the *moral law* as well as the ceremonial, these are all utterly weak in *this* view of them, good for nothing when put *in the place of Christ*.

Secondly, Let us improve the subject before us, by taking occasion from it to be truly thankful to God, if *we* have been delivered from an undue dependance on the *elements* and *forms* of religion, by being made, spiritually, partakers of its reality and power. Forms and ceremonies are absolutely necessary to keep up religion; but they are not religion itself. God conveys grace by means, and the ordinances are the means he has appointed. And if the gospel has given *us* light to distinguish these things, and to use means *as* means and steps for advancing to and apprehending Christ, when we observe so many persons around us resting *in* them and trusting *to* them, we have great reason to be

grateful and joyful. If *we* see and experience the liberty and privileges of faith in Christ, while we are careful not to make this liberty "an occasion to the flesh," happy indeed are we. If *we* are animated by the affections of adopted children, without forgetting the *obedience* and *reverence* of children, we have arrived at the best state of religion we *can* be in here below.

But, alas! *Thirdly*, we may and ought to make a further, though melancholy improvement of the subject, by reflecting and lamenting that too often, (even under the dispensation of the gospel) men seem to be shut up in the very dungeon of sin. They not only do not see the difference between the law and the gospel, but they do not, or rather, will not see the difference between *moral right and wrong*. The God of this world hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts to such a degree, that they see nothing in Christianity but what accords with their own wills and interests; they are in love with the wages of iniquity, and the base desires and pleasures of the flesh and of the world; they hug the chains of sin they are bound by, and care not for the liberty with which Christ would make them free. These (and how many of them are there among us?) are, in the plainest and grossest sense, "*born of the flesh*." Such also are they who are not *born of the Spirit*, and who exhibit no signs of being the children of God by *adoption and grace*. The family they belong to is too often manifest by their mockeries and scoffs at the children of the promise. Let *us*, my brethren, find out the way of resting *our* souls and hopes on *Christ alone*, and shew that we walk at liberty by a cheerful, unconstrained obedience to his holy will.

Again, *Fourthly*, as we find that there was a *fulness of time* in which God sent forth his Son for our redemption, should we not ask ourselves whether the fulness of time be not come for our believing on him? We have all had him proposed to us as a Saviour, and season after season have commemorated his advent in the flesh; but has his Spirit been yet sent forth into our hearts? Can we yet, through him, call God *our Father*; or is it only a way of speaking without the accompaniment of a real filial affection? When shall it be that those among us, who have hitherto kept back from Christ, (and I tremble to think how many they may be) when shall it be, that they will think of advancing to him in earnest? Do you not, in your consciences, think it *full time* to become disciples of Christ indeed? Are you not of *full age* for it? Is it too early, even for the *youth*, to come unto him? But have not many of you long enough tried the patience of God? Have you not long enough trifled on the brink of a precipice, and trusted to uncertain life and vain fruitless *intentions*? Is old age, or a state of weakness in body and mind, or perhaps a death bed, the proper time for coming to Christ? Alas! the time is usually *gone by* in such cases. *Now is the accepted time*; and let me beseech you and entreat you that you "receive not this grace of God in vain." For God's sake shake off the bondage of sin, you that are in it, and say not that you cannot break your chains. Let not Satan bewitch you, that you should not obey the truth *directly*; for, though you cannot do it without God's grace, that grace is this moment offered you. Only *desire* to be under grace, and not under the law;

only pray to God that you may deal sincerely with yourselves in the matter; only examine yourselves fairly, neither on the one hand concluding that you are safe when you are in jeopardy, nor on the other letting go your hope, as if you could do nothing. What have you to do, if you find you are in your own old tattered garments, but go at once to Christ for new and clean vestments? What have you to do, if you find you have been trusting to a legal justification and your own righteousness, but heartily to accept of his?

And now, *Lastly*, who among us can sufficiently adore that condescending love of his, which brought him down into the world, under such circumstances, to redeem us? Who can sufficiently admire his deep compassion for us in our abject state, slaves to sin and rebels to our God as we were, and as we *are*, if the gospel hath not quickened and saved, and set us free? Who that hath really *found* him a Saviour from the galling yoke and slavish terrors of the *law*, can ever cease to glorify his grace in the *gospel*, and serve him in righteousness and true holiness while they have their being?

SERMON III.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

Mark i. 15.

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel.”

WE have been meditating, my brethren, on the wonderful train of preparatory circumstances, (appointed in the infinite wisdom of God) for the coming of our blessed Saviour to the discharge of his ministry, as the great Prophet and Teacher that was promised to the world. He had indeed been the Teacher of his people from the beginning; and it was by his Spirit that the whole church of God, both before and during the legal dispensation, had been governed and sanctified. It was He himself that occasionally appeared and spoke to the patriarchs; and it was He who communed with Moses, and was the great conductor (by means also, no doubt, of subordinate agents and an angelic ministry) of all that terrific pomp in the delivery of the law at Mount Sinai. It was He “whose voice then shook the earth, but hath since shaken both heaven and earth,” removing those things that were not intended to remain, in

order to establish those things which cannot be shaken—that is, instead of the law, the *everlasting gospel*. It was He himself, “the messenger of the covenant,” the desire of all nations, “in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed,” and to whom the lost and fallen sons of men were taught to look for deliverance and relief from the curse of sin—who ordered all things in the economy of the church previously to those more refreshing and blessed times in which he was to appear in the flesh to visit and redeem his people; to perform the mercy promised to their fathers, and give them the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sin; to give it them, not as a Prophet and Teacher only, but as their great High Priest, and by making the doctrine he taught *effectual*, through the sacrifice of himself. It was He (his Spirit in them) who actuated the prophets to inquire and search so diligently concerning this salvation, and the grace that should come with it, and the glory that should follow it; and particularly what, and “what manner of *time* was signified,” for the actual accomplishment of it in his own person, as the *incarnate Son of God*.

It was common with the prophets to speak of *those days*, and *that time*, when “*a Branch of Righteousness* should grow up unto David,” when “*a King* should reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice in the earth;” “in whose days Judah should be saved, and Israel dwell safely; of the increase of whose government and peace there should be no end,” even the “*Lord our Righteousness*.” But the prophet Daniel, in particular, was favored with an exact knowledge of this sacred and earnestly desired season, and was enabled to

compute it, for the encouragement and direction of believers, who, in spite of difficulties and obscurities, had yet a sufficient light and information afforded them to perceive when our Lord's manifestation really approached. The world was just then full of the expectation. The Jews were on tip-toe about it; and the Gentiles, among whom the Jews had been dispersed, were not incurious upon the subject. Some of them we know had examined so much into it, and were so persuaded of the truth of the prophecies concerning it, that God was pleased to give them very extraordinary means of satisfaction, and to make them early witnesses of the birth of Christ, and the first fruits among the Gentiles of his converting and saving power. The eastern magi, there is every reason to believe, did not only bring their gifts as to him that was "born King of the Jews" in a temporal sense, but as to one whom God had sent to administer a kingdom of a higher and nobler nature, to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." There is every reason to think that when God sent that star to guide them in their search after Christ, he also sent the Day-Star into their hearts; that when they fell down and worshipped him, and offered him gold and frankincense and myrrh, they did it as to the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people.

This, however, was the time when the ancient prophecies were to have their completion. Now were the days accomplished that the Lord Jesus should be manifested to the world and enter upon his ministry. All things had been appointed and made ready for this moment:—His way had been prepared according to

prophecy, by John the Baptist; He had received his holy unction and commission from above, at the baptism he submitted to at John's hands; He had fasted and prayed in the wilderness for forty days, and been trained and exercised for that great contest with the devil, in which every art of temptation had been vainly tried against him; He had been succoured and waited on after his conflict by the holy angels, and all for our sakes and our instruction; to shew us, *first*, that the baptism of repentance is only an empty sign, unless accompanied and followed by the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit; to shew us, *secondly*, that we must look for *temptation* as soon as the Holy Ghost hath been given us, and by what means and discipline we must be prepared to overcome it; and to shew us, *thirdly*, that we also shall be refreshed after our conflicts with Satan, if they be well and firmly supported, and shall have a holy guard assigned us by God himself for our preservation and safety. Such were the instructions intended for us in those preparatory steps to the coming forth of our blessed Lord to teach and preach his gospel. Let it be observed, however, that he did not thus shew himself till after John was put in prison. His forerunner, we see, was already silenced; but this did not incline *him* to silence, he knew what he had to do and what he had to suffer. John had fulfilled *his* ministry and testimony; now was the Lord Jesus to enter upon his, and he begins it with giving the Jewish nation solemn notice of it—"The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel."

In this text, my dear brethren, we have, *First*, a great

assertion—an infinitely important truth declared—which, though it then had a peculiar respect to the state and expectations of the Jews, may and ought to be considered by us also with the deepest interest and seriousness.

And, *Secondly*, we have a *solemn call and warning* delivered to us, as founded upon that assertion.

Let us consider these things, I pray you, with the attention and seriousness they deserve. And may the Lord of his infinite mercy help us to do so, for of ourselves we can do no such thing; we cannot lay up the word in our hearts without divine assistance. What reason have we therefore to pray, “that he would prevent us in all our doings,” (and especially in what we are now doing) “by his most gracious favor, and further us with his continual help; that in all our works,” (and especially this work of preaching and hearing the word) “begun, continued, and ended in him, we may glorify his holy name!”

First, then, I am to consider with you the great truths declared in the former part of the text,—“*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.*” Of that expression, indeed, “*the time is fulfilled,*” I have already said enough to shew you the precise meaning, and that it referred to the season which God in his counsels had appointed, and by his prophets predicted, for the coming of his Son Jesus Christ into the world. There is a time, my friends, for *every* purpose and for *every* work of God. There is no event at all, however trivial it may seem, left at random in the world, as if it might happen either to-morrow or to-day, in this year or the next. No, the very crane and swallow observe

their exact time for coming and going, directed by God and governed instinctively by *him*. And it is the same with the coming and going of the seasons, and the produce of all the fruits of the earth that depend upon them. Whether the vine is to cast her fruit or yield her fruit, is entirely determined of God; and not a hair of our head can perish without *him*, or fall to the ground, but at the proper moment; much less can we ourselves come into the world, or go out of it, at any other time but the appointed time. And therefore still less could the time of the Messiah's coming be undetermined, that great event upon which the recovery of a lost and ruined world depended. That was a time and season that had a peculiar note of importance given it in the scriptures; and when the fulness of it was come, "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, and made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law;"¹ that is, the fallen race of Adam, who have all sinned, and are therefore universally comprehended in the curse of the law, till the blessed moment arrives for as many of them as escape it by obtaining an interest in Christ, who was made a curse for them.

But the Jews were dull of hearing, slow of heart and understanding; when they *might* have understood "the signs of the times," they would not attend to them; and it could scarcely be expected they should, in general, so well and so closely interpret the prophecies concerning Christ at this time, as to know for certain that now he must appear. Therefore He himself gives them notice of it, and tells them plainly that the time is ex-

¹ Gal. iv. 45.

pired ; that the season of the dark and burdensome dispensation of the law was run out, and that now they were to be relieved from that yoke of bondage. He meant them to understand that *a new dispensation* was about to commence, of a far more heavenly and spiritual nature than that they had hitherto lived under. They already knew that "light was sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." But *this* was a dispensation in which "life and immortality should be brought to light," in the clearest and most satisfying manner, and the most glorious discoveries made to them of the wisdom, grace, and love of God. If it were "a season to be much observed unto the Lord," when the Lord brought them out from the land of Egypt, how much more should they observe the time and season of the deliverance of sinful man from a spiritual Egypt and house of bondage, of which that former deliverance was but a shadow ? If that were a night to be remembered, this was a day to be remembered ; a most glorious day was now breaking upon them, and the dark shadows were dispersing. The night was spent, the day was at hand. The time that was now fulfilling, and the privileges now to be enjoyed, were as much superior to those they had hitherto known, as the day is above the night, and light more desirable than darkness ; for *the kingdom of God was at hand*. That peculiar kingdom of grace included in his great universal kingdom of power, and of a far more excellent though less extensive nature ; a kingdom that had been founded, indeed, in the first promise of a Saviour, but was now to be visibly set up, and exclusively established in Christ, who came to build a new church, and be

himself the declared head of it; to introduce a new *gospel* state of things, the old being abolished, or, as the apostle expresses it, "ready to vanish away."

"Behold (says the prophecy concerning it) I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind." And then follows a full description of this blessed *gospel church* and *kingdom of grace*, this "Jerusalem from above, which is free, and the mother of us all;"² the very same holy city which John saw "coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."³ He, indeed, seems to have seen her in her triumphant and glorious state, in which she was no more subject to tears, or sorrow, or death, or changes of any kind; a state as far exceeding her militant state on earth, as this exceeded and surpassed her state under the law. But this was the same Jerusalem, the same church, the same kingdom of God the text speaks of. And John goes on to describe it in a manner that was perfectly suitable to what he himself had seen and known of it in his blessed, happy, intercourse and acquaintance with the Lord Christ, his Master, who was the Author and is the Finisher of it, in whom it had its root and foundation, and upon whom every living member of it depends and will depend for ever. "I heard (says he) a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."⁴ And is not this a description of the blessed "Emmanuel, God with us?"⁵ Is not this

² Gal. iv. 26. ³ Rev. xxi. 2. ⁴ Rev. xxi. 3. ⁵ Matt. i. 23.

a description of the "Word, that was made flesh, and dwelt among us?"⁶ Is not this he "of whose fulness we have all received, (if we are indeed subjects of his kingdom,) and grace for grace?" for "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."⁷ Is not this, in short, a description of the setting up of this kingdom of God among men by his Son Jesus Christ, that they might be brought into subjection to it, and obtain salvation in it, willingly submitting to the authority of this blessed Sovereign, and happily protected by his power? Is not this the proper notion of a kingdom and government on the one part, and of protection and salvation from enemies on the other? Or shall we think or wish (as too many bad subjects do in a civil sense) to enjoy the protection and security, without yielding the submission and obedience due to government? Shall we say with that unhappy nation of the Jews, "We will not have this man to reign over us?"⁸ Shall we be so much *worse* than they, as to say it by our conduct towards him, while we own him with our *lips*, which they were never such hypocrites as to do? Or shall we copy their pride and folly, and think nothing of the power and glory of his kingdom, because he does not appear to us in the outward and visible symbols of a temporal sovereignty? Shall we desire, as the Jews did, to have the dominion in this world, and give up "a crown of glory that fadeth not away?"⁹ Shall *we* act thus, who profess to believe that Christ is now exalted at the right hand of the majesty on high, "King of kings and Lord of lords?"¹⁰ What!

⁶ John i. 14. ⁷ John i. 17. ⁸ Luke xix. 14. ⁹ 1 Peter v. 4.

¹⁰ Rev. xix. 16.

is there any thing wanting to his kingdom and government, that men should thus undervalue it? Hath he not given us a volume of wise and righteous laws? hath he not given proof that he hath a lawful and just authority to give them? hath he not appointed proper means for the publication of these laws, and sent out heralds and messengers to proclaim them to us? or, is he destitute of power to reward our obedience to them, and punish our disobedience? Nay, is there not in his blessed kingdom and rule, a provision made that no other kingdom and government can boast of—that his law shall be written in men's hearts? Let us look a little into the superiorities of this divine kingdom.

Other governments have respect only to an outward submission, to an outward law, and indeed have no possible means of effecting more. But the Lord Christ hath instituted in *his* kingdom, and for all his true subjects, the infallible means of a hearty and sincere subjection of the will and affections to him; so that that which is the *duty* of the subjects of his government is their *delight*—is accounted by them to be their glory and honor; and to be at their own will and disposal, and left to their own ways, would be their greatest misery. Again; other governments can only make prudent provision for the probable *safety* and *defence* of their subjects, but cannot ensure it. Whereas in the kingdom we are speaking of, there is security given for every soul that belongs to it; and a final victory over every enemy, is as certain as that God reigns. Again; other governments do not pretend to make a provision of *food* for all that belong to them: that is called a good government which secures to every individual what he

himself hath gotten. But this government hath bread enough and to spare for all its subjects; there is no complaining in the streets of this Jerusalem. Again; in other governments there is no great heed taken, nor can there be, about *private* and *domestic peace*; if there be public good order and tranquillity, the jealousies and quarrels of particular persons and families may and must take their course: there is no provision against private hatreds and secret discords. But here there is a bond of union and concord between all and every one, without exception, a principle of charity and brotherly love, that ties all the subjects of this kingdom close together in the firmest friendship. In short, to tell of the peace, the purity, the unanimity and agreement among themselves, of the subjects of Christ's kingdom—the supplies of every kind afforded them—the pure bread, and “honey, the milk, and the wine, without money and without price,”¹¹ would go beyond our time. But such is the nature of the kingdom Christ hath set up. This is that *kingdom of God* which he declared to the Jews *was at hand*. As much as to say to them, You have long been waiting for the redemption and consolation of Israel. You have been reckoning and considering with yourselves where Christ should be born. You have been looking out for the kingdom of your promised Messiah, and referring to your scriptures for the exact time of his appearing; behold! now is the time! behold! *I am he! Lo! I am come!*—“*Repent, and believe the gospel.*”

But, alas! they were looking for a kingdom of another

¹¹ Isaiah lv. 1.

kind; they were pleasing themselves with the thoughts of a temporal dominion and sovereignty, and of being lords of the whole world around them. They supposed that when that kingdom of God was at hand, they must prepare for war and victory, led on to both by some great captain, zealous for the law, raised up of God for that purpose, to *extend* and *perpetuate* Mosaic institutions, instead of abolishing and doing them away. They could not, would not, apprehend that these were mere shadows of things to come, and that "the body was of Christ."¹² They were still saying to themselves, "We have Abraham to our father,"¹³ and ours is the glory, the adoption, the covenants, the promises. They thought themselves perfectly secure in their external church privileges, as the peculiar people of God; and were in no sort of readiness for such a doctrine as that from their Messiah, "*Repent, and believe the gospel.*"

And I very much fear, my brethren, that the case is much the same with the greater part of Christians at this day. Bred up and nursed under the profession of Christianity, and resting in the outward signs and privileges of our profession, we can hardly conceive there is any thing further in it; and the doctrine of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,"¹⁴ sounds strangely in the ears of most men. *The fulfilling of the time, and the coming of the kingdom of God*, even to their doors, gives them no serious thought or concern. They seem to have no interest in it—are they not already Christians?

Having, therefore, spoken to you on those infinitely

¹² Coloss. ii. 17.

¹³ Matt. iii. 9.

¹⁴ Acts xx. 31.

important truths declared in the former part of the text, let me now go on, *Secondly*, to bespeak your consideration of the solemn call and warning that follows and is founded upon them, "*Repent, and believe the gospel.*"

And here let me beseech you to lay aside pride and prejudice, which were the ruin of the Jews, which blinded *them* to the discernment of their time and day of grace, and made them refuse the kingdom of God when it really came; and will in like manner blind and ruin every soul among *ourselves*, that is not humbly and honestly desirous to have them removed. Pray, I say, to have pride and prejudice removed from you, while the gospel is preaching, and submit to enter the kingdom of God as "*little children*," for there is no other way. The Jews had broken the *moral law*, however expert and diligent they were in the *law of ordinances*; and so have we all. There is, therefore, no salvation for us by a *covenant of good works*, or upon a plea of *innocency*; for not only Jews and Gentiles, but Christians too, are shut up under guilt; all have sinned, and so must take the benefit of a *covenant of grace*, if they pretend to any favor with God, or any security for their souls; and these are the terms of it, "*Repent, and believe the gospel*"—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."¹⁵ We had need then well consider whether we are of the number of true believers, and what it is to believe the gospel. It is a serious thing to reflect upon and examine into, whether we shall be lost or saved. Now here we find repentance and faith in

¹⁵ Mark xvi. 16.

the gospel going together, as the great requisites to salvation. In a genuine work of grace, they never can be really separated. Faith in Christ, it is true, may for a length of time *seem* unconnected with repentance, and coming far behind it; and I think it necessary to notice this in proceeding to speak of them.

What, then, in the *first place*, is repentance? for if we have false notions of this, all will go wrong. Why repentance, my brethren, (as the original word signifies,) is a *change of mind*—a *better* mind—an *after* consideration and judgment of ourselves and our condition, and of all that we have been doing hitherto; and a change of *disposition* and *desires* concerning our future conduct. Repentance, in the whole extent of it, respects—the *mind and judgment*—the *will and affections*—the *life and conduct*. It is called in the scripture, “Repentance from *dead works*”¹⁶—“Repentance *unto life*”¹⁷—and is described as turning “*every one*” of us “from our iniquities.”¹⁸ There is no man who ever makes a right *judgment* of the nature, and guilt, and end of sin, while he is living under the power of it. In this condition he is said to be dead while he liveth. He makes no right distinction between good and evil; none, so as to choose the one and refuse the other. The pleasures of sin for a season seem preferable to Christ and his gospel, and the eternal blessings it offers him. Or if not, there is no such conviction as inclines the *will* to forsake sin; for repentance, I repeat, respects the *will and affections*, as well as the mind and judgment. It is a turning to God with “*purpose of heart*.”¹⁹ It is with

¹⁶ Heb. vi. 1. ¹⁷ Acts xi. 18. ¹⁸ Acts iii. 26. ¹⁹ Acts xi. 23.

regard to our wills chiefly that we are said to be dead in sin, and "alienated from the life of God;"²⁰ and therefore a change of will and disposition towards sin is a principal part of repentance. We must not only discern that sin is an evil and dangerous thing, but must view it as an odious and hateful thing, and therefore, consequently, we must fly from it as such. And thus a true repentance will lead on to a change of *life and conversation*; for it is a turning from dead works that is here in question; and without this, there is no confession of sin or profession of repentance that can profit us any thing. To talk of repentance and live in our old sins, and to be satisfied with a carnal mind, and with what the scripture calls a "vain conversation,"²¹ is to mock God, to make void his law, and to deceive our own souls.

In repentance, therefore, my friends, if it be genuine, if a sincere and saving repentance, our *minds* will, by the light of divine truth, be brought to determine clearly and steadily concerning the nature of sin. We shall be enabled to put off all prejudices, and lay aside all pleas and excuses for sin, and conclude it to be an universally bitter and evil thing—evil in *itself*—evil to *us*—evil as to its *present effects*—evil as to its *future consequences*—evil and shameful in *every way* and in *every sense*—evil above all *other evils*—yea, the *only real evil* in the world. Without such a sight and judgment of sin as this, there can be no such thing as true repentance. And thus we shall be led on further, to a change of *will and affections*. The pleasures of sin

²⁰ Eph. iv. 18.

²¹ 1 Peter i. 18.

will be no longer pleasures to *us*; while we were living in dead works, we had a delight, a complacency, and satisfaction in doing them; but now there is an absolute reverse. So that if at any time we are surprized into sin, it will be followed by deep contrition; "we hate that which we do,"²² as the apostle says. The love of sin is now utterly banished from our minds. In the remembrance of our transgressions we are filled with godly sorrow, grief, abhorrence, and detestation of ourselves; yea, revenge against ourselves; which often puts new converts upon plans of rigid mortification and punishment of the body; not seeing so clearly as they afterwards do, that no sufferings of theirs can satisfy the justice of God for the least sin, or can have any thing to do in the matter of atonement for sin, which is only to be found in Christ. But without *shame*, and *grief*, and *humiliation* for sin, there *can* be no repentance. Where the soul is not thus affected and stirred at the remembrance of sin, there can be no real forsaking of it. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?"²³ is a question that will still apply to all true penitents. And to *this* it *must* come—to a change of *life and conduct*—to a stedfast relinquishment of every sin. Not such a kind of *sudden* resolution to relinquish sin, as very often comes in consequence of a present alarm, through the pressure of some *danger, sickness, trouble, fear, affliction*; but which goes again almost as soon as it comes, or as soon as the pressure is removed. No; I mean a steady, unshaken resolution in the *heart*, manifested by its effects

²² Rom. vii. 15.²³ Rom. vi. 21.

in the whole life and conversation; an earnest desire, a fixed endeavor to observe the righteous judgments of God at all times and upon all occasions; to keep the holy commandment delivered to us at all events, and to walk in "all the ordinances of the Lord blameless."²⁴ This will furnish effectual evidence of an inward change in the mind and will, of a real sincerity there; but where this is wanting, whatever is pretended, whatever is professed, the work is as yet unsound. There is "a lie in our right hand,"²⁵ unless it come to this. It is a turning to the Lord like that of Judah, "not with the whole heart, but *feignedly*."²⁶ Yet I am not preaching *perfection*. I know very well how short we shall come after all; in how many things we shall offend; nay, in every thing *some* mixture of offence and infirmity. Nevertheless, if we consult the scriptures, we shall find, that there is no mention there of repentance, in which this *actual forsaking* of sin is not included and expressly required.

But the first *initiating* work of repentance is what is called *conviction of sin*; and is what our Lord tells his disciples would be one of the great leading effects of the gift of the Holy Ghost.²⁷ Upon the first communication of *his* light to our minds and consciences, we see a holiness in God and his law, which we never saw before; we see an unholiness in ourselves, of which we were quite unaware. The law becomes a pure glass to our consciences, when thus held up to us, and represents us as we *are*—altogether sinners, and infected with sin. The conviction I am speaking of is therefore a very

²⁴ Luke i. 6. ²⁵ Isa. xlv. 20. ²⁶ Jer. iii. 10. ²⁷ John xvi. 8.

different thing from an assent of the natural understanding to the authority and truth of the law of God; and a very different thing from any condemnation of the natural conscience, for known breaches of the moral law. It is the operation of an *enlightened* conscience; it is a *spiritual* view of God's law, surprizing us with a sight of the entire departure of our hearts from God, so as to lay us low, and strike us down at once before him in the deepest self-abasement. And if upon the coming of some knowledge into our minds upon the subject of revealed truth, this sort of conviction (in a degree at least) does not come with it, there is reason to fear that a true repentance neither is, or is likely to be wrought in us. We have a short, but yet perfect, description of the process of a true repentance in the parable of the prodigal, who (it is said) first *came to himself*, began to have a right *judgment* of his condition, to see how naked and destitute he was:—"How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and *I* perish with want?" Then he began also to have his *will* and *affections* stirred towards his father's house; he had a *desire* to go home, "I will arise and go unto my father." And thus it did not end in a mere purpose and resolution, but he actually went; he shewed, by his *conduct*, the reality of the change in his mind; and you know how he was received. This is *evangelical repentance*; we must humbly betake ourselves to God, *believing his gospel*.

Such, substantially, are the feelings of those who, after sailing for a length of time with the current of the world, are brought to the conviction that they have satisfied themselves, all the while, with a mere nominal

Christianity, and perhaps not even much of that. Those who, in correspondence with their baptismal vows, are anxious to devote their hearts to God in early youth, are usually drawn in a gentler and less perceptible manner. Whatever may be the way in which God deals with earlier and younger converts, the case of a penitent in after life is very different. The parable of the prodigal most fitly represents the feelings, convictions, and spiritual wretchedness of those who, after a course of vice, or a careless squandering of the talent or patrimony committed to them, become at length, through the mercy of God, truly converted.

But now, in the *second place*, what is the gospel? Why, the very thing that all such repenting sinners want. It is a message from God that he will receive them, (if they can but believe it) for Jesus Christ's sake. Hear it as it was delivered by the angels to the shepherds,—“Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And can there be better news for sinners, now become sensible that they are such, awakened to a feeling of their miserable condition as children of wrath, and finding themselves justly liable to the curse of the broken law? Can there be any thing more acceptable than to hear of a deliverance from that curse; of a Redeemer who hath been made a curse for them; of a Saviour who hath borne their sins in his own body on the tree; who came to save his people from their sins? Can any thing be so acceptable to a poor undone debtor, about to be shut up in prison till he shall pay the uttermost farthing, as to hear of a

surety and kind bondsman, who hath interposed and answered for him; to a man who is conscious he hath destroyed himself, who is convinced that the terrors and threatenings of the Lord are real things, and that the avenger of blood will speedily overtake him,—as to be told of a city of refuge, a sure hiding place and covert from the impending retribution? Go to such a man and tell him of temporal blessings, and offer him worldly comforts and pleasures, and you will find that these things are not the things he is now in search of; these can give him no relief. Give me pardon for my sins, he will say; give me peace with God and deliverance from the wrath to come; give me peace with myself, and security against my own accusing conscience; give me relief from this heavy chain of sin that I drag about with me, this load of guilt that thus weighs me down; go, carry your worldly offers to those that are insensible to any thing but their worldly and fleshly wants and desires; give *me* peace and deliverance for my soul, or you can give me nothing. Now this is the very deliverance and peace that Jesus came to purchase for true penitents; this is that gospel he came to make good to them; this is what he himself went publishing and preaching throughout every city and village, “*shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God,*” and not only declaring to sinners that he came to save them from perdition, but to open to them the kingdom of heaven; not only to procure them *grace* but *glory*, and put them in eternal possession of the privileges of the kingdom I have already described to you. The gospel is therefore called *the gospel of the kingdom*. And if those be not glad tidings which pro-

claim such things; if those be not glad tidings which give assurance to penitent sinners that they shall be accepted of God, and “made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,” and which offer them the spirit of holiness to fit and prepare them for such a glorious state,—I know not what can be called so. Surely it is a blessed “faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

But what if we have experienced no convictions of sin, no sense of guilt, are we not therefore guilty? The state of such persons is peculiarly dangerous; they are asleep and dead in sin, and do not know it; they are on the very brink of destruction, and do not perceive it, *will* not believe it. And among those who *do* perceive their perilous condition, many are much more inclined to be saved *in* than *from* their sins. But the call and warning to them is ever the same; the terms and preliminaries offered them are unchangeable,—“*Repent and believe the gospel.*” Be humbled for sin, that you may not be punished for it. Believe in God’s promises, that you may be at peace with him through Jesus Christ. So repent and believe as to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Only understand rightly that it is a free pardon that is offered you, through Christ, and by faith in his name alone; only rely entirely, as ruined destitute creatures, on the blood and merits of the Saviour; only go to that Saviour with a broken contrite heart, and look mournfully to him whom your sins have pierced; only consent to be delivered by him after God’s manner, and as a matter of *free grace*, and dispose yourselves to be made holy by him in your whole future life. This is *the faith* that will save you. Give

glory to the God and Father against whom you have sinned, by a true unfeigned repentance; give glory to the Redeemer who came to save you, by a simple faith in his will and power to save you; give glory to the Holy Spirit who hath wrought you for the selfsame thing, and be *thankful*. Think not that any outside reformation will be of any service without the righteousness and grace of Christ; nor, on the other hand, delude yourselves with the profession of faith and trust in Christ, without a reformation and change in your hearts and lives; these must go together, God himself hath joined them; and whoever presumes to put them asunder, must do it at their peril. O! there is nothing so much to be dreaded and abhorred as a pretence taken for sinning from the grace of the blessed gospel. That any person, living in sin without repentance, should have an interest in Christ or his gospel, is contrary to the glory of God, the honor of Christ, the very nature of the righteousness and holiness of God, and would make the gospel a thing to be abandoned by all wise and sober persons, and fit only for enthusiasts and madmen. Even the doctrines of purgatory, penances, satisfactions in the Romish church, by which poor sinners are deluded into a notion of pardon at a cheaper rate than by a true repentance, are, without comparison, less mischievous than the gospel would be, if it did not require repentance from dead works, if it did not require holiness in order to see God. It cannot be denied, my brethren, that multitudes in this day do abuse the doctrine of the gospel, under a vain confidence of mercy and pardon from God through the righteousness of Christ, while they willingly continue in sin. It can

scarcely be denied that even sincere and holy men, who preach the gospel, do sometimes, in their zeal for its purity, too much forget to connect it with this doctrine of a *practical repentance*. I must own that I think we none of us enforce it enough; and thus it is that the upright asserters of gospel-grace are often accused of giving countenance to presumptuous sin. It is, in truth, an accusation that has more of the *hatred of gospel grace* in it, than of *the love of holiness*, as the careless lives of those who bring it against us do sufficiently shew. Yet we should not give them this handle. The real truth is, however, that none can press forsaking of sin and real repentance upon any solid ground, or by any effectual arguments, but *they* by whom the grace of Jesus Christ in the gospel is plainly and fully declared.

I would now make a faithful application to you of all these things. Let me intreat you seriously to examine into and consider your own interest and personal concern in the duties of *repentance* and *faith*. And, first of all, let me ask you, my dear brethren, concerning the kingdom of God, of which the text speaks. Is it yet come to *you*? You pray, every day, that it *may* come. How does this matter stand? Have you ever applied to yourselves that expression, "*the time is fulfilled?*" Do you think it relates only to the Jews and *their* day? Believe me it is of equal importance to us in *our* day. The time (till time shall be no more) is continually fulfilling to nations, to churches, and to individuals. The gospel travels on in the world, inviting men to *repent and believe*; and there is a voice with it that cries to them, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand,*" that puts them plainly in mind

that time and tide stay for no man. It continues, perhaps, with a nation or with a church for many years; but if they reject its warnings and offers, if they despise and treat it as a common thing, then it passes on, they have had their time, and it is now gone by; and they may desire afterwards to see one of the days of the Son of man in vain.

It is so with particular churches also, and with small districts and societies in countries called Christian. Whenever, in the providence of God, events and circumstances have been so ordered and matured as to make way for the evangelical message, and the time arrives for its being proclaimed by some faithful minister of Christ, then is that society, that church or place, something in the situation of the Jews when Christ came forth to preach to them. Perhaps they had been previously under a dark dispensation; perhaps the gracious offer of salvation through Jesus Christ had not been duly made to them. At length, however, and in the fulness of *their* time, in a day of grace and mercy, he comes to them and proposes to set up his kingdom among them, to teach and instruct them in the ways of his happy government, and to confer upon them all the privileges and immunities of his people; then may it be truly said to them, "*The kingdom of God is at hand.*" But though it comes to them, it will not stay with them, unless it be kindly entertained. You know how it fared with many synagogues of the Jews, and with many cities of the Gentiles, to which the apostles brought it, as their several *times were fulfilled*. They either opposed it, or prized it not, and therefore they never tasted of its blessings.

It was offered them, but they knew not their time and day of visitation, and so it went to others, who, having more discernment, gratefully welcomed it, and are now reaping the blessed fruits in heaven.

So it is also with individuals. The time is fulfilled to us all, severally, to whom Providence has sent faithful preachers, and other religious advantages. But to some there is a kind of inward intimation that *now is the time*; there is a more sensible dealing of God with them for the good of their souls; a proposal, as it were, immediately from Christ himself, of the advantages of his happy government. He knocks more loudly at the door of their hearts, and tells them he would fain have an entrance to set up his kingdom there, to expel all idols, all usurpers, and make them his happy, devoted subjects for ever. Do they listen to him? It is well. But if they only listen, and do not, after a while, arise and let him in, he may be wearied with waiting, may be disgusted and turn away; they may never more have the *inclination* for serving him which they had; and though the means of grace be continued to them, the good motions of the Spirit may cease to accompany those means, and the kingdom of God be as much taken away from them, as if it had been finally and entirely removed from their outward ears.

If these things are so, my friends and brethren, then consider, I beseech you, what you have to do. Do not merely listen to the gospel as if that were all; *repent and believe it*. Do not content yourselves with merely calling upon Christ, and saying, Lord! Lord! *receive and submit to him*. The longer you go on in your own way, and *do not* the things which he com-

mands, the less likely is it that you will ever be benefited by him. Nothing but a *heartfelt repentance* and *true faith* in Christ can save you; and when you have these, you will gladly and diligently attend upon him, in his own instituted means and ordinances; and in the mean time and in order that you may attain this state of mind, make use of those ordinances. But use them as means, not as the end. Use them with a constant recollection, that no outward rites or observances are, in themselves, effectual to reconcile you to God. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."²⁸ I conclude, therefore, as I began,—
"Repent and believe the gospel."

²⁸ Rom. x. 4.

SERMON IV.

THE PERFECTION OF JESUS CHRIST THE SALVATION
OF HIS PEOPLE.

A SERMON FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

Hebrews v. 9.

*“And being made perfect, he became the author of
eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”*

It is matter of wonder and sorrow that having such plain instructions in the way of light and life, men should go on still in the way of error and death, and remain ignorant of the truth as it is in Jesus. There is a strange infatuation and dulness in their minds, so that the things they hear, nay repeat continually, make no due impression. They hear of a Saviour and acknowledge his name; they read of the redemption that is in him, and are well contented with it; they have no objection whatever to any benefits that by his precious blood-shedding he may have obtained for them. But as to the manner and mystery of his redemption, and the eternal salvation of which he is the author; as to his qualification and preparation for the work he came upon—as to their qualification and preparation for receiving all the blessings

of it in time and to eternity—these things they leave unsettled and commit them to more busy enquirers, and do in fact, live and die without any right knowledge of them. The only things about which they are not inquisitive and diligent and for which they will trust to common report, are the things that concern their eternal peace. They read that Christ Jesus is their peace, that he hath broken down every partition between God and them, and hath obtained for them an entrance into the holy place, and thither they think they *must* come. They read that he hath loved them and washed away their sins by his blood, and therefore they conclude that they *are* cleansed. They read that being made perfect, he became the author of eternal Salvation, and therefore they flatter themselves they shall be saved by him ; they go no further than this, it suits their indolence, it suits their ignorance of themselves, it suits that willing distance at which they stand from the way of holiness. The *how* and the *why* he is the author of eternal salvation, what that perfection means which on his part has an influence on it, and what that obedience means which is on their part connected with it, are points they do not much trouble themselves about ; yet the very angels, we are told, desire to look into these things ; and by how much greater reason should we desire to look into them, whose eternal salvation depends upon it. A negligence here may be fatal, and therefore the apostle in this very place reproves it in those he was writing to. He complains that they had need to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God and of the foundations of their hope as Christians.

A hope which he well knew depended on their rightly understanding and receiving the doctrine of the atonement. He well knew (and I would to God we all well knew it) that our joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ is inseparably connected with it, and therefore he labors in this epistle to shew the excellency of the person and office of Christ, the weakness and insufficiency of the legal sacrifices, and the fulness and perfection of the sacrifice of the Son of God. The inferiority of the priests of the order of Aaron, and the authority, honor, and efficacy of our Saviour's priesthood. A subject in which as miserable sinners we are all deeply interested.

For if Christ were not a priest for ever and a king for ever, if his power were not divine and his priesthood unchangeable, if he could not by himself purge our sins, and were not ever living to make intercession for us, to plead his meritorious death and precious blood for the healing and justification of sinful souls; then should we be still every soul of us in our sins. There could be no refuge or escape for us from the curse of the law, there could be no satisfaction paid for us to the justice of the holy God; the guilt and bitterness of sin would be our only portion, and the end of it would be that we should all perish for ever; no rest, no hope, no comfort would remain to us. It would be in vain that we sought concealment for our inward corruption by an outward specious abstinence from the grosser violations of God's law, since there is not any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things, even the thoughts and intents of the heart, are naked and open to the eyes of him with

whom we have to do; we should all in God's eyes be sinners, polluted and odious without Christ's atonement, with nothing to cover or excuse us in the day of visitation and revelation of the righteous judgments of God.

"But seeing," says the apostle, "that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God," let us hold fast our profession; let us abide by this blessed security, and trust to nothing else; let us not be discouraged and cast down by a knowledge of our sinfulness and weakness, or doubt of help in our worst extremities, "for we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin;" he is both disposed and qualified to succour us when tempted, and to save us to the uttermost; "let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."¹

And then he goes on to speak of the nature of the priest's office, and the divine authority under which it is held and exercised, and of the special destination and high and exclusive sense in which our Lord Jesus Christ became our High Priest, and the peculiar discipline by which he was fitted for it; though he were a son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, *and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*²

I propose, therefore, dear brethren, upon the occa-

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

² Heb. v. 8.

sion of our assembling here to day, to commemorate the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, to enquire—

First, what that perfection means, to which he is said to have attained in order to save sinners,

Secondly, how it has an influence on their eternal salvation, and,

Thirdly, what that obedience is which is here so closely connected with this salvation by the apostle.

O may the Lord Jesus Christ himself look down upon us from heaven, where he ever-liveth to make intercession for his people, and stir us up by his Spirit to attend to these things, and enquire seriously after them ; may he fill us with a true desire to be instructed in them from above, and in his own good time bring it to good effect, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Now as to the *First* point, we proposed to enquire into, what is meant by that perfection mentioned in the text before us, we must consider that it can have no relation to our Lord Jesus Christ as a divine person, for as such he was perfect from all eternity ; being perfect God before he took our nature upon him there could be nothing added to his own complete perfections, nor could he possibly be more or less perfect at one time than another. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was and which is to come. Jesus Christ (as it was expressed in another place) the same yesterday to day and for ever, being equal with the Father as touching his Godhead, all power, and wisdom, and truth, and goodness, and every divine

excellence must be attributed to him absolutely, and acknowledged to have been his always. The holy scriptures ascribe all these attributes to him, and we cannot suppose that he derived them or any part of them from his union with the human nature; therefore it must be in that nature only that he is said to have been made perfect.

But were there any imperfections at any time to be charged upon him, even in that nature, as the Christ? Was he not holy, harmless, undefiled, from his very first entrance into the world? Was he not separate from sinners all the time that he went in and out among them, perfect, unchangeable both in will and deed to serve and obey God? Yes, but his perfection and constancy were to be brought out, proved, and tried by sufferings, sufferings that began at his birth and ended only with his death; a manger his first pillow and cradle, and his last bed the cross; no accommodation for him any where; no security or protection; no indulgence from the world; a fugitive at the first, and dealt with as a criminal at the last; a man whose life was made up of sorrows, whose acquaintance with grief was continual, and whose trials were beyond all conception; while he lived, traduced, vilified, and beset by the liars in wait; when he was dying, mocked and insulted by his enemies, with the most unrelenting cruelty, and railed upon even by one of the malefactors who was put to death with him; when he looked for pity, there was none; when for comforters they were not to be found; he was despised and rejected of men; and what was much more intolerable, he seemed and *was* indeed as to his own

feelings, when upon the cross, deserted of God. This it was which wrung from him that heart-rending cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" O what an obedience was his which carried him through all this with equal constancy and submission! O what a patience was it that would not suffer him to draw back! an obedience and patience in this respect especially admirable, that his humiliations and degradations, were endured in the character of a Son, who was the image of the invisible God. Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to claim an equality with God, yet "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."³

Now the purpose of all this was to shew his perfect obedience to the will of the Father, both in doing and suffering, that the whole law of God might be magnified and made honorable, under the most difficult and trying circumstances that a creature could possibly be placed in, that no unrighteousness of any kind might be found in him, no impatience, no repining, no selfish regard for his own will and pleasure, no proud resistance to the blessed will of God. That every tittle of the law, both ceremonial and moral, and in its highest and most spiritual import and meaning, might be performed and submitted to, so that none should be able to say there was not a perfect obedience paid to it.

³ Phil. ii. 6.

Often have I represented to you, my dear brethren, and particularly when last assembled here, that Christians are called upon to present themselves a living sacrifice to God ; and lo ! here is the perfect pattern of it, even He who was over all, the beloved Son of God. From one degree of suffering and obedience he went on to another, through his whole life upon earth, till his painful, shameful, and cruel death was the crown of the whole ; a death to which he was conducted through agonies inconceivable, and which he bore under the pressure of spiritual desertion and darkness, with a constancy that nothing could exhaust till all *was finished*. Thus therefore was he *made perfect through sufferings*.

But was this perfection of our blessed Lord's intended only as a pattern for our imitation ? Did the Lord Christ do and suffer all that he did and suffered merely that he might leave us an example that we should follow his steps ? Was the main end and purpose of it, to shew us how the law should be obeyed, and all righteousness fulfilled ? and was there no further meaning in all that perfection of character by which he was distinguished ? O yes, blessed be God ! there is gospel as well as law here, for "*being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.*"

I have now to shew you, in the *Second* place, how and in what manner such a perfection has an influence on such a salvation, and how impossible it was that we could be saved without it.

And here St. Peter, who speaks of the example Christ left us, will further instruct us. In order to

make it plain, I shall give you the whole passage, by which you will understand that though our Lord Jesus Christ was made perfect, and became a perfect model to us of a holy obedience, yet this was not his *principal* errand when he came into the world. St. Peter, when he was reasoning with the dispersed converts among the Jews about that patience in suffering which was to be expected of Christians, produces Christ himself as a pattern of it. "For even hereunto," says he, "were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps*; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."⁴ Thus far does he set him forth to us as an example for our imitation.

And then he comes to the *great point* for which he suffered so patiently and became so *perfect* in suffering; "Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed: for ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."⁵ You see he here makes use of some of the very words of the prophet Isaiah, who thus describes the great end and purpose of our Lord's sufferings—"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our trans-

⁴ 1 Peter ii. 21.

⁵ 1 Peter ii. 24

gressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the *Lord* hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.”⁶

This, then, is the great, finished picture of the sufferings of Christ; but here there is not a word of his example, it all relates to his atonement, and the manner in which he made our peace with God. We find him here represented as innocent and spotless, neither doing violence nor uttering deceit, without sin or taint of sin, and yet treated as a sinner. What,

⁶ Isaiah liii. 4, &c.

therefore, can be meant by it, but that he suffered for our sins, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God?" What can we possibly understand by it, but that God in his mercy accepted, and Christ, in his love, undertook, to pay a ransom for ruined souls, to satisfy for the debt they had contracted to the infinite and perfect justice of God, by an infinite and perfect payment, even the price of his own most precious blood; and so to satisfy, as to procure their pardon, and justification, and to clothe them with his righteousness; for in doing as well as suffering he was a Saviour, and the iniquities of all who believe were not only laid upon him and cancelled by his death and sufferings, but his obedience to the law of God is imputed to them and made theirs. As his soul was made an offering for sin, and he bare the sins of many, so did this righteous servant of God by his knowledge justify many. A blessed exchange is effected between Christ and his faithful people; he takes upon him their iniquities, and returns them his obedience and merits, which is clearly and beautifully expressed by the apostle, when he tells us that God "made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

It is plain, therefore, from the scriptures, that Christ suffered in our stead, and also became obedient to the whole law for man. This perfection of obedience, both active and passive, doing and suffering, was manifested, to screen and shelter us from the terrors and rigors of the Divine law, and to blot out the hand-writing that is against us in

the book of God's remembrance. In this way our guilt is purged, our persons are justified, and a righteousness declared and made ours, such as God can be satisfied with, yea, delight in, through him "who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."⁷

Thus we see what it was that Christ came to do and to procure for us ; he came to vindicate the justice of God by suffering for sinners, and to assure them of his mercy and love by pleading his own merits in their behalf. We see how God "set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be at one and the same time just in taking vengeance of sin, and the justifier of the sinner that believeth in Jesus."⁸ We see clearly also, I trust, by this time, not only what that perfection means which the text speaks of, but what our interest in it is, and how it has an influence on our eternal salvation. We see that without it we could have no peace or reconciliation with God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. We have all sinned, "all we like sheep have gone astray ;" our nature is corrupt and sinful, and our actual transgressions are more in number than the hairs of our head, and our hearts might well fail us if we stood upon our own righteousness, or sought deliverance by our own tears and sorrows. God could not without changing his nature look favorably upon sinners, for the least sin would make us odious to him, and put us out of the reach of his love and mercy. Unless we could get rid of his justice, not an ocean of our tears could wash away a single sin.

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁸ Rom. iii. 25.

But a drop of Christ's blood can wash away a world of sins, because he was perfect God as well as perfect man—because he perfectly humbled himself in undertaking to save us—because he perfectly submitted to the will of the Father in his method of saving us—because he perfectly performed all the conditions of the covenant of grace, and completed his own prediction “that not one tittle of the law should fail, that all should be fulfilled.” He obeyed and performed it all in every particular ; the piercing eye of God could see no flaw in his character, and as “it became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings :” so it becomes him to receive all penitent believers as his adopted children in Christ, to give them eternal salvation according to his promise, and to look upon them as clothed and invested with the merits and righteousness of his dear Son. And without this righteousness of faith who could have peace or comfort ? and with a right faith who can fail of peace ? There is the promise of a God who cannot lie, and the merits of a Saviour who was complete in all things, and the Spirit of the Holy One to cleanse our hearts and consciences, and apply the blood of sprinkling to the whole man, his inward thoughts and outward duties ; and thus we have assured peace, peace with God and with ourselves, and all through Him who is our peace—all through Him who was made perfect, that he might become the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him.

And now, therefore, *Thirdly*, we come to inquire

what that *obedience* is which is so closely connected with our eternal salvation by the apostle, for we must be careful to make no mistake here, we are not to suppose it meant that *our* works and righteousness, *our* obedience to God's law, can procure for us acceptance with him. We have broken that law, and even if our works of obedience could be from henceforth uniform and pure, this would not cancel past guilt, any more than a future regularity in payments can liquidate a past debt; the truth is, we have nothing to pay at any rate, or in any state; we know or ought to know that our best works are so imperfect that they require to be washed in the blood of Christ; we know or ought to know that we can do nothing rightly or acceptably before God, till, by repentance and faith in Christ, we are accepted of him and freely pardoned. Indeed the doctrine delivered to you under the second head of my discourse, makes it apparent that we are delivered from condemnation in virtue of the Saviour's cross and passion exclusively, and justified by his merits and obedience only.

And yet eternal salvation is only to them that obey him. How, therefore, obey him? Why by the obedience of *faith*, for to *believe* is the first and great command of the gospel. "Repent and believe the gospel" is the great call to sinners. It is by faith in the record God hath given us of his Son, as having life in himself, that we are made partakers of *life eternal*; it is by faith in the name and merits of the only begotten Son of God; it is by *faith in his precious blood* that we obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of his passion; it is by faith that Christ is put on

and made ours. If indeed we are made partakers of this saving faith, our great object will be to work the works of God; to obey his holy will, and to have his law so impressed upon our hearts as to be reflected in our lives. But in order to this, let us listen to what Christ himself says upon the subject: "This," says he, "is the work of God (the seed and principle of all good works) that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This, therefore, is the first thing to be done by us; this the great difficulty to be cleared; to believe in the promises of God and to listen to his gospel, to submit our wisdom and reasoning to his word and revelation, and humbly to accept his salvation in the manner he offers it; a manner that is contrary to our natural pride, and calculated to cure us of it; a method and way of mercy in which all the divine perfections are employed and united, and yet which none can see the beauty and value of till he give them eyes to see it.

When we have thus heard God's voice and obeyed it; when we have believed his report and trusted in his promises; when we have submitted from the heart to the law of faith, and performed that leading act of obedience "*the believing in the Lord Jesus Christ*;" when we have given up all fancied merit in ourselves, and even in our faith, perceiving that also to be a gift of God, and only a means afforded us of receiving Christ and his salvation; then we shall find him to be indeed a Saviour, and his salvation a great salvation. Then we shall discern the excellence of God's way of saving us, and how exactly suited it was to our miserable case and situation.

We shall see in it wisdom, and love, and mercy, and truth, and righteousness, and peace, and shall adore God who has done such things for men. We shall then have a *motive* to glorify him which we could never otherwise have felt. We shall feel the force of an unfailing impulse and influence, prompting us to all holy obedience. The law of God will be in our hearts, and our footsteps shall not slide; or if they do, we shall have help to recover ourselves, and to proceed more diligently and carefully in the way of righteousness. We shall never be satisfied with what we *have* attained to, but always be looking forward to higher degrees of perfection. It will be our meat and drink to obey the will of God in all things; his law will be our delight, and in it we shall exercise ourselves day and night. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, to him who was made perfect through obedience, *our* obedience will be firm and faithful, our sins will be mortified by his cross, our wills will be subjected to his will, our lives will be conformable to his life, and we shall clearly understand in what sense and manner our salvation is connected with our obedience. We shall then be at no loss to discover how truly and absolutely he is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.

Eternal salvation, then, dear people, is the thing in question with us if we be Christians. This is what Christ hath engaged to bring us to, and nothing less; it is either this, or we have no part in him. *Eternal salvation!* and have you considered what it is? and, furthermore, what the reverse of it is? Do you think in your consciences that you are in

the way to it? Are you obedient in the gospel sense? have you such a faith in Christ made perfect through the sufferings of the cross, as to be ready to suffer with him, and to mortify and crucify all your corrupt affections? This is the great test of sincerity. You have heard, in the epistle of the day, that by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Being himself perfected, he perfects those who believe in him. Has he perfected you? that is, are you of the number of those that are sanctified and set apart to his use and service, and going on in a way of stedfast obedience to his will? Do you think and do you feel that his holy spirit has quickened you, and do you desire to devote yourselves to him? Do you fly from that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good? These are necessary enquiries for you to make, because if you are not sanctified, you are not justified; you are yet in your sins, and the wrath of God abideth on you.

Let me apply this touch-stone of sanctification to the consciences of different classes:—Do the drunkard and glutton think they are sanctified to God, who make a god of their belly, and whose chief pleasure resembles that of a brute? Does the lascivious and impure person, either in thought, word, or deed, imagine himself sanctified to God? Is he a temple of the Holy Ghost? Does the swearer, and blasphemer of God's holy name, or the breaker of his holy sabbath, desecrating that day he has set apart for himself, following his own will, and doing his own pleasure, instead of finding it his pleasure and joy to be doing God's will, I say, do such persons imagine that they

are sanctified to God, and shall obtain that salvation promised to the obedient? Can the slanderer and hinderer of God's word, the discourager and persecutor of those who have embraced his way of salvation, conclude that God has given them of his good Spirit to perfect them, by the offering of the blood of Christ? Can the lover of money, or the devotee of pleasure, as it is called, think they are sanctified to God, the one making mammon his god, the other devoting himself to every thing that must shut out God from his thoughts, and altogether indispose him for all holy duties and pleasures? Can *any* careless, thoughtless, unawakened souls suppose themselves to be in the road to heaven? My brethren, sanctification is a serious thing. O believe me, that the will of God in the offering of the body of Jesus once for all, and the blood of that lamb poured out to purchase and sanctify his people, are the most serious things in the world; I would to God you might now all go home and think seriously of them.

You have read and heard enough of Christ's sufferings and afflictions, but can you say that they have ever caused you any grief and affliction? I do not speak of mere natural sympathy and compassion, for these soon pass off when the tale is no longer remembered, and may be felt at the sight or recital of a fictitious tragedy. But I ask whether you know what sorrow for your sins is, as the occasion of Christ's sorrows? Have they caused in you deep reflections upon the dreadful nature of sin, which could exact such a sacrifice to the justice of God, and the awful perfection of that justice which could not be satisfied

upon any other terms, and the unspeakable danger you are in if you have not made your peace with God through faith in that sacrifice? Has it never come into your minds in what a miserable condition you will be when Christ shall come again, if you have no interest in his meritorious cross and passion; and how polluted you must now be in the sight of God, without it, whatever your manners and character may be in other respects?

But many, O Lord, how many, have not faith in these things. What, therefore, can I further say but entreat them to pray for it? What can I further do but pray myself for them? O let us all pray that God would enlighten our minds in the knowledge, and direct our steps in the way of his truth, that we may not fall short of knowing *him*, whom to know is life eternal. Thou hast told us plainly, O Lord, that nothing shall be refused to honest, humble, prayer; give us the spirit of it, give us that true desire for the help we want, which arises from a sense of want; put into our minds that good desire, O Lord, and then bring it to good effect, through Jesus Christ, to whom, &c.

SERMON V.

A SERMON PREACHED AT WELLS CATHEDRAL, ON
EASTER SUNDAY, 1803.

Colossians iii. 1.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

“WHAT shall be the end of them,” says St. Peter, in one of his epistles, “that obey not the gospel of God?” What shall be their end, it may be added, for many such there are, though I trust none such here, who never trouble themselves to inquire what the gospel is, that they *may* obey it? “Dost thou believe on the Son of God,” said our Lord to a poor creature whose eyes he had miraculously opened, who answered and said, “*Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?*” And when Jesus had satisfied that question, he said, “*Lord, I believe;* and, carrying his belief into action, “*worshipped him.*” This was, therefore, an humble, simple, and sincere faith, resulting from a sincere inquiry; and the reflection Jesus made upon it, deserves the consideration of us all;—“*For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they*

which see might be made blind;”—that they who are humbly sensible they *want* help and light from above, might have it; while they who think they see clearly already, and want it not, might remain the blind victims of their own pride. They, therefore, who trust to their *natural* apprehension of Divine truth, will be more and more blinded to it, will fail of any right knowledge of spiritual things; and what is more material, will fail of a right will to know them. They will have no inclination to come unto Christ, that they may have life; they will not trouble themselves about his gospel; they will not cry, with the poor blind man, “What is the gospel, Lord, that I *might* believe it?” but, going on in their accustomed way of security, will hear it with as little serious interest, or true intention of soul, as if there were no dangerous mistakes to be made about it, or any particular end to be obtained by their understanding it rightly. Whereas God, who makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by the gospel in every place, has told us that we, the preachers of it, are to you, the hearers, either “the savour of death unto death, or the savour of life unto life.” It is not a small matter, therefore, whether you hear it rightly preached, or whether you give diligence to understand it rightly, for life and death eternal hang upon it; and whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, whether you will be humbly concerned about it, or proudly indifferent, it shall stand as a witness either for you or against you, in that day when there shall be no further means of evading its force, nor any longer a possibility of resisting its conclusions.

The gospel, upon the face of it, is full of wonderful

things, which God, in his wisdom and righteousness, has wrought for us. We hear in it of the Son of God, the blessed Saviour of men, condescending to dwell with them in their own flesh and likeness, and *that* in the very poorest condition and character, for the purpose of being their Prophet and Teacher, and shewing them all things necessary to their salvation. We hear in it what is more astonishing, that after a life of sorrow and persecution, but of pure obedience, (for in doing as well as suffering he was to satisfy for us) he gave himself up in this assumed nature and character to the most ignominious and cruel death, for the purpose of becoming their Priest, and offering an atonement for them. And further, we hear in it that when he had lain till the third day in the grave, he then rose again from it, disdaining the power of corruption; and having conversed awhile with those who were to be witnesses of the fact, at length ascended to heaven, his native seat, that he might be the King as well as Priest of his chosen people for ever. Many other things of the highest import are included in the gospel, and connected with all this; but these are the leading particulars of what Christ has done for us; and though they are altogether astonishing, are so plainly told us, and on such evidence, that nothing but a proud and evil heart of unbelief can tempt us to deny or mistake them.

Moreover, as to the *present* effect of all that our Lord Jesus Christ performed for us, the gospel teaches us, that from each of these circumstances of his death and sufferings, his resurrection and ascension, there must arise a corresponding influence and impression upon the temper and character of every one of his true dis-

ciples. That a kind of inward experience, answerable to these outward events, must be the result of them in the believing soul; or, to speak more plainly, and more in scripture language, that we must suffer with Christ if we would reign with him; that we must die with Christ if we would live with him; that we must rise with Christ *here*, if we would rise joyfully with him hereafter. And if then we would ascend triumphantly with him into heaven, we must even now, in mind and heart, thither ascend, and with him continually dwell—must “*seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.*”

I propose, therefore, in this discourse, to speak, *First*, of that death with Christ which every Christian is supposed previously to undergo before he can rise with him.

And *Secondly*, to speak of that rising with Christ mentioned by the apostle in the text, and which he plainly seems to think the Christians he was writing to were acquainted with.

And *Thirdly*, to dwell a little on what he recommends and lays down as a necessary proof of our being risen with Christ—*The seeking those things which are above.*

And *lastly*, I shall make some reflections upon these most serious truths, and aim at a faithful application of them to the hearts and consciences of those that hear me.

But what will *my* application of them amount to? Whose heart or conscience can *my* voice reach? Let me rather pray that the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to guide and lead us into all truth, to enlighten the

understanding, and dispose and sanctify the will and heart, may assist by an inward voice what I am delivering outwardly to the ear, and make it an effectual blessing to every one of you.

Now as to the *First* point I proposed to speak to. Though the death of Christ was, in the great scope and meaning of it, intended to be a satisfaction to the justice of God for sin—to be “*a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world*”—yet its virtue and efficacy were not to rest here. There was to be a power in it, working to a most material end in the hearts of all believers—a power to kill and mortify the carnal nature in them, and thus make them “die with Christ.” The passages in the gospel that relate to this sort of death, are so obvious, that one had need hardly mention them; as where we are said to be “*buried with Christ into death*”—to be “*planted together in the likeness of his death*”—to be “*crucified with Christ*”—to “*crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts*”—to be “*made conformable to Christ’s death*”—to “*die daily*,” as the apostle protests he did,—to “*bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*.” These, it is true, are metaphors; and so far, (being very strong metaphors) they shew clearly, that to be dead with Christ is no very palatable, no very practicable thing. But there is more than metaphor here, for the truth is, that a spiritual view of Christ crucified and dying *for* sin, has a transforming efficacy, an influential virtue in it, to make such a beholder die to sin, by a real and persevering hatred of it, by a continual conflict with it, and by a resolute determination never to give it any quarter; a determination rather to

die himself than to be overcome by it. This is *dying with Christ*. The contemplation of that death, and of those sufferings of the Son of God, brought home by the eye of faith to the soul, will inevitably make a correspondent impression *there*, and deaden it to that which *he* died for. It cannot be otherwise; the influence will be certain, powerful, and permanent, in the exact proportion that the object becomes realized by a lively faith. What! can the believer see his Lord and Saviour hanging on the cross; can he see Jesus Christ crucified, *evidently set forth before his eyes*, and view the prodigious vengeance his sins were accessory to, and the prodigious love of his Master and only Saviour thus dying for him, without a hatred and antipathy to all sin, without hating himself for being liable to it? Can he see the hands, stretched out on the rack, that never wrought iniquity, and still work iniquity with his own hands; the feet, torn with nails, that never, no, never deviated from the paths of peace and righteousness, and suffer his own feet to carry him afterwards willingly into evil ways; and the lips, that never spoke deceitfully, or uttered one sinful word, but intreated for his murderers in the very act of their cruelty—can he see those lips, I say, dropping vinegar and gall, (for they found no better charity than this to moisten them) and ever indulge his own lips and tongue in the language of reviling and bitterness, or employ them for purposes of fraud and falsehood? Can he see the head, crowned with thorns, that thought of nothing but love and mercy and schemes and arguments to persuade men to both, and himself be hatching schemes of mischief, and laying snares for his neighbour; or the heart, pierced

through with a spear, where love and mercy wholly resided, never, for one moment, quitting that habitation, and still be harbouring malice and hatred, or any thing uncharitable in his own heart? No, it cannot be; a spiritual view of Christ crucified and made sin for miserable sinners—a genuine realizing impression of him carried home to the heart by faith, as if we saw him actually nailed to the cross, and pouring out his blood for our redemption, will have the effect of nailing us to the cross with him, of disposing us to deny ourselves, and give up our rebellious wills to follow his. Intent upon such a spectacle, the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind will find its way into our hearts, will cleanse us from the pollutions of sensuality and self-love, and will incline us to any sacrifices that may endear us more tenderly or unite us more closely to him. And truly nothing less than his own spirit of love, infused into us this way, could possibly qualify us for submitting to the painful death we are here speaking of; for, believe me, it is a very grievous thing to die to sin. Sin is what we naturally love above all things; and until grace has changed us, we desire to live only that we may enjoy it. It is a death, at least, as bitter to us as our natural death, and will be accompanied by feelings of the very same kind. He who is dying a natural death, is undergoing a very awful and painful change, exceedingly distressing to flesh and blood; he is parting with all those objects he has been hitherto acquainted with, and he cannot but fondly look back upon them and linger to give them up; he sees not yet distinctly the nature of the exchange he is about to make; an inveterate opposition to it rises up still

within him, and strange apprehensions press upon him that call for all his fortitude. And so will it be with him who is dying to sin; it is an alteration equally distressing to nature; a body of sin is dissolving which he has long agreeably dwelt in, and he has not had sufficient experience of the higher enjoyments to be derived from the crucifixion of that sinful body, with all its inordinate affections, and of living spiritually with Christ by faith. A thousand reluctances and fears about the new life he is entering upon, and whether indeed there be any thing real in it, will invade him, and he will yet be looking back to Egypt, on the very confines of the land of promise. His sins—his beloved sins! what! all to be parted with, and left for ever behind? What! all passions and prejudices, all his sensualities and pleasures, all to be renounced; no compromise at all permitted? Oh! the plucking the roots of sin from the heart, so intimately and deeply entwined there; the forcing it to give up all its accustomed lusts and longings, without exception; to give *heart* and all to God, that have till now been given up to every thing *but* God. This is a real death; the scriptures represent it as such; the church, in her offices, confirms it; and if we have not suffered it, and known something of the pain and conflict of it, we cannot be risen with Christ, or prepared to rejoice with the gladness of his people on the return of this holy day.

For now, to speak, in the *Second* place, as I proposed) of that rising with Christ mentioned by the apostle in the text, let us see how he argues upon it, and how *he* connects it with such a previous dying to sin as I have been discoursing of. "*Therefore,*" (says

he, in the sixth chapter of the Romans) "*we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of God the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*" And so, after a while, drawing this conclusion, "*Likewise reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" And to the same purpose, in his epistle to the Colossians, "*Ye are buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*" That is, ye are actually risen with him, from the death of sin to a new and spiritual life, if your faith in his resurrection be of that sort which it is the office and prerogative of the Spirit of God to work in the heart.

As therefore the death of our Lord Jesus Christ was designed, by a right contemplation of it, to work in our souls a death unto sin, to kill and mortify sin within us; so was his resurrection, when viewed in the light of that faith which is of the operation of God, intended to work in us "a new birth unto righteousness," a real change of heart and life, a real disposition to all positive obedience and godliness. The one was to kill and extirpate the produce of the corrupt and earthly nature in us; the other, to plant and quicken in us all the new graces and heavenly fruits of a true conversion to God. And will not this be the sure effect of it upon the devout believer? Can we, any of us, assert our faith in that astonishing event we are assembled to com-

memorate, or pretend to that glorious hope of a happy resurrection connected with it; or rejoice in this victory of our Redeemer over death and hell, and him that had the power of death—the devil; over *his* great enemy and ours, and not be ready to share with him in his conflicts, as well as join him in his triumphs? Shall *he* be seen bursting through every impediment, and rising from the chambers of death with such a dazzling brightness as almost struck dead with fear the guards appointed to watch him, while we, professing to believe in this, and claiming to be risen with him, remain the same weak and willing slaves to sin we were before, buried and sunk in base pursuits and pleasures, and darkened still, amidst all this blaze of light? How can this be? If the resurrection of our blessed Lord be indeed a reality with us, if we are heartily and sincerely affected with this great fact, a resurrection from dead works will be the sure consequence of it, and we shall spring upwards with him into a new existence. “The love of Christ will constrain us” to it; it will be a motive irresistible; we shall feel, experimentally, what the apostle tells us, “*That Christ died and rose again, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him.*”

The greater number of Christians, I fear, content themselves with a cold assent to these things; they never dream, indeed, of contradicting them, and are very willing to take the benefit of them, if that were all, but that is *not* all; the impression they are to make upon us must be of another kind; and therefore this will be the reasoning of a *true believer* in them.

This is the season in which the ever-blessed Son of

God, manifest in the flesh, completed the work of redemption for me, a miserable sinner. I was born in sin, and bound in sin, and subject to death and ruin, both of body and soul. The hatred and vengeance of a holy God against sin were such, that nothing less than this amazing method of salvation could have appeased it for me. Christ, therefore, was given for my offences, and is risen again for my justification. The gracious God has set my Surety at liberty, and therefore now I am sure that he considers the bond I was under to abide his justice, as fully cancelled. But how shall I justify his wisdom and goodness in this transaction, if it have not the effect of destroying the power of sin over me, as well as the guilt of sin in me? Or how can I pretend to say that I understand the whole scheme of what my Saviour did for me, when I leave out of the account that necessary effect and operation of it—the enabling me to “*perfect holiness in the fear of God*,”—to serve and please God in newness of life. I know that *my* works and doings can have nothing in them of a meritorious or saving power; that all resides in Christ, whose merits could alone obtain for me that I should be accounted righteous before God. But I am sure likewise that to him I owe it that I now know what it is to have an inward disposition to righteousness, and that I desire to give proofs of a sanctified recovery from sin. I know that he is now employed in heaven in sending down upon me the influences of his grace and Holy Spirit, to strengthen me for these proofs, and qualify me for the services he expects of me in the character of a believer. Nay, I am assured that he is working by a previous and continued operation upon the souls of all his people, to

prepare and make them *meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh then, if I consider myself of this blessed number, let me grovel no longer among the worms of the earth, in a spiritual obscurity and confinement of soul, but arise to light and liberty with the Lord Jesus. Let me hasten to clothe myself in the proper dress and livery of his people, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Let me no longer conform to the world, and waste my precious time in following their idle amusements and vain conversations, which only serve to dissipate and weaken the mind, and indulge and encourage the heart in that master passion of self-love; but be bent upon redeeming my time—be sensible of my new character, and the obligations that lie upon me to support it—be *resolute* in supporting it, in spite of whatever reproaches may be thrown upon me by those who know not God, who have *heard* of the resurrection of Christ only, but never *felt* the power of it. Let *them* (if they are determined upon it,) go on in their accustomed ways, and travel that smooth and commodious road that never led to heaven. Let me proceed stedfastly in the less frequented path, and be content to encounter any difficulties, if by any means *I* may attain to the resurrection of the dead—if by any means I may experience and give evidence of a real rising again unto righteousness, a willing mortification of all my evil and corrupt affections, and a daily progress in all virtue and godliness of living; for this is the scope of Christianity. These, O blessed Jesu! are the effects of thy glorious resurrection upon those who have heartily accepted the Divine record of it in the

gospel; and to every such Christian will this returning season be a season of sanctified happiness and pure joy. Blessed are the people, O Lord, who can rejoice in thee! They will ever be giving thanks, but especially at this time, and saying, "Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us!" To *this* inheritance will the children of God be looking.

And therefore, *Thirdly*, if we be indeed risen with Christ, and the load of corruption removed which weighed us down to the earth, we shall give proof of the happy change by seeking those things that are above; and our pursuits will be directed to objects worthy of renewed and exalted minds. If we know our best inheritance to be in heaven, it cannot be that our chief anxiety should be about earthly things. The case seems perfectly plain—it is an argument not to be evaded; at least it is the apostle's argument, "*If ye be risen with Christ,*"—if ye be indeed recovered from the stupefactions of an earthly, sensual, sinful nature,—"*set your affections,*" now spiritualized and purified, "*on things above, not on things on the earth.*" Your true life and enjoyments are now hid with Christ in God; that is, they are hidden to the men of carnal minds, who cannot at all comprehend what they are, nor conceive what pleasure there can be in becoming dead and mortified in their members which are upon earth, to gratify which has been the uniform study of their lives. But they who are risen with Christ, have

had experience of other gratifications and pleasures, and well know what they are seeking for. They that have once tasted how gracious God is, and had any of those pledges of the eternal blessedness which it pleases him sometimes to give his children here below, are perfectly clear that they are making a wise exchange in giving up sensual for spiritual, and present for future enjoyments. Nay, they can have no enjoyments here any otherwise than they are accompanied by the grace of God, by a sense and persuasion of his favor and blessing, and a good assurance of more satisfying pleasures hereafter. And it is marvellous to me how any persons can believe they belong to Christ, and are children of the resurrection, who have arrived at nothing heavenly in their views and desires, their tempers and frame of soul, and are still entirely taken up in consulting for their present low condition, as if they had no higher prospects, and the things of time and sense were the only inheritance they were born to. Is this the character of a joint heir with Christ? Let us try it by a familiar comparison. We have most of us, perhaps, had opportunities of observing the conduct and manners of young persons, born to high titles and great estates; we cannot but have seen what an influence this has had upon them, even from their childhood—from the moment they were able to comprehend any thing of their future greatness; and how it has disposed them to the attainments and studies that were suitable to it. We cannot but have observed how big they have looked upon the presumption of it, and what a lofty turn it has given to their character and language, and how, under every restraint of their minority, the assurance and firm

belief of the inheritance that awaited them broke out, and discovered itself upon every occasion. Now surely there will be something of this kind discoverable in the heirs of salvation. Surely they who are persuaded of their adoption into God's household and family, and have a lively hope of an incorruptible crown and inexhaustible inheritance in heaven, will be giving *some* intimations of it in their carriage and deportment, and general turn of thought and conversation here upon earth. Surely they also will be looking to and longing for the day when they shall take possession of their wealth and dignities, and not be so foolishly and sots-tishly sunk as others are in the pursuit and enjoyment of what they know to be altogether unsuitable to their high destination. What! risen with Christ, and still rooted in the earth!—intent upon a throne above, and yet embracing a dunghill below!—seeking a heavenly country, and yet behaving as if they were quite satisfied and at home in this, and were never to leave it! The saints of old were certainly of another mind; *they* were persuaded of the promises and embraced them, and “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” and the desire of a better country ran through all their conduct, and was manifest in their whole lives: “Wherefore God (says the apostle) was not ashamed to be called *their* God;” an expression which should put us upon considering whether he will not be ashamed to be called *our* God; when it shall be examined into what we have done for him, and how we stood affected towards him; when the veil of self-delusion shall be removed, and every face shall gather blackness that has not been humbly looking up to him, in full dependance

upon his word and promises, and every heart be seized with terror and amazement that has not been devoted to him in gratitude and love. Then shall it be known to all the world who they were that sincerely served and glorified God, and who they were that rendered him an outward homage only and interested service. Then shall it be manifested clearly who were the true and faithful followers of the Lamb, justified by his blood and righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit; and who they were who rejected this gracious scheme of salvation, choosing rather to trust to their own unsanctified works, and denying the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of that inheritance Christ hath purchased for his people. Then shall it be seen who they were who made the sacrament an unholy thing, by partaking of it in the outward symbols only, instead of spiritually and inwardly feeding upon it by faith; and who they were who hungered after it in faith and love, and came to it with a deep sense of their own unworthiness and God's great mercies in Christ Jesus. These only are they who can be said to belong to *him*; and whoever they are (for it cannot be certainly discerned by any eye but God's,) they are in some respects already in heaven, for the members will spiritually be where the head is. Their faith will be continually representing to them the reality of that blessed place; their hope will be still flying out to the enjoyment of it. They have laid up their treasure where it cannot be stolen or corrupted; and where their treasure is, there will their hearts be also.

It remains that I intreat you, in the *last* place, to examine seriously into the state of your pretensions to

eternal life with Christ. It remains that *we all* enquire of ourselves what is the inward experience we have of a resurrection from dead works, and what are the outward testimonies we are actually giving of it, in our daily walk and conversation. *Am I risen with Christ?* should be the question, the anxious question, made by every one of us; and by this criterion we should try it, *am I seeking the things which are above?* Every man's conscience surely can resolve that question for him; every man surely knows what he is most bent upon; what his thoughts and affections are most engaged about; what he is looking to as the object of his greatest ambition, and what he delights in as his chief joy. But come, let us try it by the word of God, that infallible touchstone of truth, in the chapter before us. The word of God leaves nothing undetermined for us, and the apostle hath here taken care that we should have no excuse for ignorance, as to the plain marks and characters of those who are risen with Christ, and seeking the things above. Every man can tell by the standard he is here furnished with, what manner of man he is, and whether he has attained or *is* attaining to a real conformity with Christ; whether he be really disposed to *mortify his earthly members*, by the suppression of every propensity to *impure gratifications, inordinate affections, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry*. Every man can tell whether he has put off *anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of his mouth*; whether he *tells lies*, to deceive or flatter his neighbours, and whether his tongue and heart always go together. *We* are fallen on evil days, and are in the midst of evil tongues; and

the few who dread duplicity and hypocrisy will be apt to exclaim with David, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men: they speak vanity every one with his neighbour; with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." Surely every man can tell whether he is seriously bent to overcome all these evil habits and passions, and thus to "*put off the old man with his deeds.*" And then whether, as an elect child of God, he has set about putting on the new man, in "*Bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing and forgiving, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave him.*" Every man can tell how far he is disposed to that "*Charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*" Not in the abused sense of it, as if it were charity to encourage sinners in their ignorance, and leave them to think every man might be saved in his own way, instead of the way of God's appointment; rendering the gospel both useless and fruitless, instead of the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;—not in this *abused* sense of charity, I say, but in that sense of it which urges him to be most solicitous about that which is of most consequence to his neighbour, and leads him to give him his assistance, not only in the petty concerns of his perishable body, but in the great concerns of his immortal soul.—Leads him to have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way; to admonish and warn the wicked, to comfort the weak and feeble Christian, and edify and strengthen the upright in heart. Every man can tell whether the peace of God, to which he is called, *ruleth* in him, pacifying

his conscience, and disposing him to peace and harmony with all around him; and whether the word of Christ *dwelleth* in him, and abideth with him, a resource always at hand, a rich magazine of hope and comfort, teaching him to be thankful and grateful to God with heart, and hand, and tongue, and voice; and, in short, whether he be truly concerned that all he does and all he says should be in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the praise of the glory of his grace; whether he be indeed serving the Lord Christ, or serving and pleasing himself only; and whether he has a firm and well-grounded knowledge and assurance that he shall receive the reward of the inheritance offered him.

These are the signs of a people risen with Christ, and seeking the things above; and thus, or nearly so, has the apostle expressed them; but they are not convenient proofs for the men of the world to give; and, therefore, allow me to point out to you, that it is not the faint inclination, the lazy wish, the inconstant purpose, the occasional effort, that will prove you to be in earnest in your search after heavenly things, or give you any comfortable hope that you shall attain them. It is not the having the mere *relish* of the gospel when you hear it, without looking to the *end and effect* of it, in a wholesome nourishment and actual growth, that will prove you to be alive with Christ. No; it must be a steady, prevalent, direction of the *heart* towards the things that are above; a continual dwelling of the mind upon them, and persevering care and diligence to avoid falling short of them. Our faculties and powers must be bent to pursue and press after them; *forgetting the things which are behind, we must still reach forward*

to those that are before; pressing onward towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

This, therefore, is the sum of the whole:—*they* shall have the things above who have sought them; *they* shall find the way to heaven whose hearts have been set upon it; *they* who are risen with Christ *here*, shall appear with him in glory hereafter. *They* who, laying aside every weight, and the sin that did so easily beset them, have run with faith and patience the Christian race, looking unto Jesus, and making *him* the great object of their desires, shall have their desires fully satisfied, and shall enter into the joy of their Lord. And now may the God of all grace grant us all to be like minded, and to arrive at this happy end, through Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, &c. &c.

SERMON VI.

INCREASING DILIGENCE IN DOING THE WILL OF
GOD, AND A PROGRESS IN HOLY OBEDIENCE,
THE TEST OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

1 Thess. iv. 1.

“We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.”

THE state of the true Christian is progressive, there is no remaining at a stand in it. Indeed, the constitution of nature, as well as of grace, is such that no man in any natural calling, trade, or mystery, can be supposed to continue just where he was, without going forward or going backward. He either improves in skill and knowledge, or else he loses somewhat of the skill he had gained; for in fact, as it is by practice and repeated trials that we come to any proficiency in any thing, so it is by the same way that we keep up that proficiency, and of course increase in it. If it be but the making of a shoe or a hob nail, let the man whose trade it is, only drop his hands and get idle, and cease

from his labor for any time, and he will find, when he endeavours to return to it, that it is not so easy as before, nor put out of hand so well; and his customers will find it so too. This, I believe, you will all allow, and can all well understand. I trust, therefore, you will understand, upon the same principles of reason and common sense, that in the great Christian calling there is no stopping short, even if we have arrived at a considerable growth in grace and true practical piety; and that the apostle's entreaty and exhortation to his Thessalonian converts, *to abound more and more* in pleasing God, arose from his knowledge of the nature of things and the nature of men, and of the necessity, even under divine influences, of continued exertions on our part, to *build ourselves up in the holy faith*¹ and practice of Christianity, so as to have peace and comfort in our progress through life, and the sound hope of a blessed immortality when we die. Here is, in this text,

First, a positive fact adverted to by the apostle, that they had received from him the fullest practical instructions upon the subject of Christian morals and conduct; and,

Secondly, an exhortation founded upon it, that they would take care to make a suitable *improvement* of their advantages, and stretch forward to higher degrees of perfection; and,

Thirdly, (which is the great thing in all such considerations) here is the *motive* mentioned, by which they must be prevailed upon to listen to him.

¹ Jude 20.

I shall endeavour to speak of these things in a plain simple way, and have only to pray that the *Spirit of "simplicity and godly sincerity"*² may accompany both you and me upon this occasion, that I may speak as I ought to speak, and that you may listen to me as you ought to listen, not merely as to a poor weak mortal man speaking his own words, but in truth the word of God, a word that *effectually worketh in them that believe;*³ and may it also work faith in your hearts.

The *first* thing I mentioned as contained in the text, is the fact of these Thessalonians having received from St. Paul the fullest practical instructions for their walk and conduct. I shall enlarge upon this fact in his own way; for he goes on, through much of this chapter, to recount to them the things he had taught them. I shall therefore take them in the same order.

You know, says the apostle, what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus; and the first thing insisted upon was, we find, their *sanctification*; the setting themselves apart for the service of God, as holy vessels, "*vessels of honor, fit for his use.*"⁴ This sanctification will, if it be a real thing, run through the whole of a man's character and conversation. He cannot be sanctified in one part of it and not another. The apostle mentions two particulars; though some, indeed, have thought that what he says, from the third to the eighth verse inclusive, relates only to a holy abstinence from sins of impurity; and that having told them it was the will of God, they should abstain from fornication, he goes on to warn them against the higher crime

² 2 Cor. i. 12.

³ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 21.

of adultery; that they should not defraud and rob one another in that most tender and sacred of all property, their conjugal privileges and endearments. But be this as it may, we must all be sensible how positively the gospel forbids us the indulgence of any and all unlawful lusts, which equally offend God and debase and degrade ourselves. It is not merely that such things are an abomination in his sight, and do, if not truly repented of and forsaken, effectually exclude us from his peace here and presence hereafter, but their nature is to darken and harden the mind in such a manner as to render our conversion to God a more improbable, a more difficult thing than it would be under other circumstances. Such is the general course; though grace is a victorious principle, and can and does, in some instances, overcome the vilest propensities and habits of the fallen nature. Flee then, brethren, from the very thought of such vices, if you have any thought of Christ and his religion. "If any man defile the temple of God," (which is his own body) "him will God destroy."⁵ "The will of God" (remember it) "*is your sanctification.*"⁶

And now, to speak of fraud and dishonesty in general.—It is equally the will of God, says the apostle to these Thessalonians, that "*no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter,*" whether small or great. Here, not only direct knavery and thievery are forbidden, but even the least overreaching in our dealings with each other. Alas! the deceits that men practise upon their own souls in the course of worldly business, are innumerable and lamentable. The mys-

⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 17.

⁶ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

teries of iniquity in the heart are deep, and the delusions of sin astonishing. Not only *men*, but professing *Christian* men, will allow themselves in things, the evil of which, the common natural conscience, one would think, should be quite alive to and aware of. But however this may be, the renewed and purified conscience *must* abhor duplicity and craft, concealment and sly advantages; nay, even the least degree of insincerity. The sanctification of the Christian man must be made to appear in every worldly transaction. He will ever remember that the *Lord's eye is upon the heart*,⁷ and that the Lord is the "*avenger of all such*"⁸ as have their hearts set one way, and their words and professions another. Let me forewarn you and testify of these things with the apostle, for God, I trust, hath given to *us also his Holy Spirit*; and *he "that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God."*⁹

But all right practice springs from right principles; and therefore this great teacher, St. Paul, here passes very properly and very dexterously to the mention of *brotherly love*. You need not, says he, that I write unto you of it.¹⁰ He gives them the credit of knowing this principle, and puts them in mind that they were taught it of God, taught it every way. They had now the old scriptures in their hands, in which the love of their neighbour was laid down as a positive, fundamental precept, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"¹¹ And they had the Lord's enforcement and explanation of the precept, as the second great commandment in

⁷ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.⁸ 1 Thess. iv. 6.⁹ 1 Thess. iv. 8.¹⁰ 1 Thess. iv. 9.¹¹ Lev. xix. 18.

the law,¹² and his own divine discourses and example to perfect it. But they were taught it by the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love itself; it was an experimental knowledge, knitting them together in love, and uniting them all to Christ himself as their head, and shewing them clearly that they could not love one another independently of him and his influence flowing into their hearts, nor be secured in any of the duties and virtues of the Christian character without it. To keep their vessels in honor upon a sure and right principle, and to do justice to all in all things, would never be accomplished (nor can it to this day) upon any other ground, or by any natural power of theirs. I wish, my friends, you could but once well understand this, that you might be entitled to the same testimony that St. Paul gives here to his converts, that they actually did love one another;¹³ and that your ministers might be able, with propriety, to beseech you (as he did them) to increase more and more in brotherly love; for you know, that unless a thing is really begun, it cannot be carried on to an increase. Therefore it concerns you to find out whether you yet know any thing at all of real scriptural brotherly love or charity, which is "the very bond of perfectness and of all virtues,"¹⁴ and is set here by the apostle in the midst of the duties he is reminding them of, as if to bind and connect them firmly together.

And next, he recommends *quietness, peaceableness*, and diligent *attention to business*; to their own proper business, whatever it was; two virtues, that if generally

¹² Mark xii. 31.

¹³ Mark xii. 10.

¹⁴ See Collect for Quinquagesima Sunday.

practised, would keep men, one may say, from all vice. What is it that brings so many evils upon so many persons, and leads them into so much sin, but a restless unquiet spirit, temper, and tongue, that will not let them remain at peace themselves, or suffer others to be so; that will not let them stay quiet at home; or, if at home, be happy and well employed there? What is it that produces so much mischief in society, and breeds so much disturbance, and so many quarrels, but the minding other people's business instead of doing our own? The man that is quiet and satisfied to be where he is, and in the path of his duty, whatever it be, and to do his own business without meddling with that of others, and working with his hands (if his station is that of manual labor) to maintain himself and those that belong to him, is the only respectable, useful, and happy man; and is, at the same time, truly fulfilling the will of God in his sanctification and setting apart to *his* service, in the duties of that particular calling. I say his *sanctification*, for the quiet contented mind I have been speaking of, and the industry in business that has been mentioned, is usually the effect of grace; such a disposition and course of life can hardly be maintained without it, certainly not be reckoned upon as a secure thing. Some men are naturally of a quiet temper and constitution, and some are naturally laborious; but the quietness that springs from religious principle, the labor that is diligently pursued in the fear of God, is a far higher thing. Oh! the peace of God, when it enters into our employments and economy of life, is a blessing indeed, and sanctifies every thing we do. The Spirit of God stirring us up to industry for our creditable

maintenance and allowable comforts, under God, the great disposer, and in a dependance upon his help and promises, is a far higher principle from that of mere animal activity and restless anxiety to provide for the flesh. Study, I beseech you the difference. Try to get at the quietness which God gives, "*the godliness with contentment, which is great gain,*"¹⁵ and then he will surely bless you, and add all other necessary things unto you. But here is a particular reason for it, added by the apostle, and another precept included in it,—"*That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without ;*"¹⁶ that is, towards their heathen brethren, who had not embraced the new religion of Christ. He does not altogether mean honesty in the common sense of the word, but a general propriety and consistency of behaviour as Christians, that so they might recommend their religion, and shew the idolaters (who would naturally be watching their conduct, and be ready to fix a stain upon them, in order to excuse themselves) that it was a religion that brought power with it to depart from evil, and to practise every thing lawful and right; to be industrious in their callings, and just in their dealings, even towards their enemies; and that thus another good effect might follow from it, their having lack of nothing that was necessary to their own comfortable support.

In this manner did they receive of the apostle how they ought to walk and to please God. In this manner did he inculcate upon them purity in their persons, integrity in their whole conduct and conversation, quietness and peaceableness among their neighbours, a

¹⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 6.

¹⁶ 1 Thess. iv. 12.

diligent attention to business, an industrious working with their hands to provide for themselves and avoid all encroachment upon the property of others, and every cause of scandal among their heathen brethren; and all this upon the only principle by which it could be effected, *brotherly love*; not natural benevolence, but *divine charity*. In this manner did he, who was the great champion for the doctrines of *grace* and of *justification by faith only* in the righteousness of the Redeemer, labor to warn his converts against the perversion of those doctrines, to impress upon them a *personal* righteousness and true holiness, and to enforce the absolute necessity of a more than *common* discharge of all social and moral duties upon all who "*named the name of Christ*."¹⁷ How different this method from that of many who preach the gospel in our day! who lead men to think duties of very little consequence, nay, to be quite disgusted when they hear of them in a sermon. But let all here remember that such a preacher was *not St. Paul*.

On the contrary, (to come to the *Second* part of our subject,) that great apostle was not a man to do or to recommend any thing by halves. He not only laid down the things we have been speaking of, but he *entreated*, he *exhorted* his converts to *abound* in them more and more. They had had the fullest instructions from him as to every part of the Christian character. Since you "*know these things*,"¹⁸ (we may imagine him to say,) *do them, improve upon them, press forward to higher degrees of perfection in them*. I *beseech* you as beloved

¹⁷ 2 Tim. ii. 19.¹⁸ John xiii. 17.

brethren, and if, indeed, you owe me any love, if you feel an affection for me as your Christian friend, refresh my soul and spirit by letting me see that the gospel hath had its proper effect, and that my labors have not been in vain. Nay, I *exhort* and *charge* you, as well as entreat you; I speak with authority above my own; I *demand* it of you, as the messenger and minister of Christ, and I expect you to obey me as one that has "*the rule over you*"¹⁹ in these things, and must give an account of you hereafter. As, therefore, you have had great advantages, as I have "*kept back nothing that could be profitable to you,*"²⁰ and as you *have* profited and shewn yourselves hitherto a teachable and obedient people, be careful to reap the full benefit, and shew the most ripened fruits of what I have done and you have done. Cultivate every good and holy disposition, be zealous in every good word and work, and go on to be more and more so. Be ambitious of an entire sanctification. Follow after "*peace, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*"²¹ "*As he that hath called you is pure and holy, so be ye pure and holy in all manner of conversation.*"²² Let the gospel be seen in your *life*, and shine out clearer and clearer in it every day. Recollect that a child, when he first begins to walk, does not walk straightly and firmly; the habit of walking must be acquired, and the strength for it gradually attained. Can you suppose then that the habit of *walking so as to please God* will not demand of you much time and labor? Can you believe that the holy rule you are to walk by—*the word of Christ*,

¹⁹ Heb. xiii. 17. ²⁰ Acts xx. 20. ²¹ Heb. xii. 14. ²² 1 Pet. i. 15.

and the holy example you have in view—the *life of Christ*, are standards to be easily reached? What if you abstain from actual impurity and dishonesty, have you yet conquered all inclinations, all thoughts of the kind? have you yet conquered every thing selfish and insincere in your dealings with one another? Do you “*love one another with a pure heart, fervently*?”²³—so pure that there can be no *advance* made in it? Have you indeed yet accomplished that high and heavenly rule of doing to your neighbour precisely what you would be done unto?²⁴ Have you yet perfectly repressed all vain and busy curiosity, all tattling, and tale-bearing, and meddling with other people’s matters? Is your diligence complete in your *own* business? Are your peaceableness, and gentleness, and contentedness with your own things and in your own place, such as cannot possibly be exceeded? Have you yet perfectly arrived at the art of walking in wisdom to those that are without? and do you never forget yourselves in their presence, so as to bring your religion into disrepute? Surely you cannot think that you have attained to all this; *I, St. Paul*, have not attained to it; but I reach *forth* to these things; “*I press towards the mark*,”²⁵ and so must you; and after all, that with your utmost good will and diligence you shall have ever done, there will still be much left undone; you will find that you “have not attained, nor can be perfect.”²⁶ Thus, in my weak way of setting it forth and explaining it, we may suppose the apostle to have expressed himself on

²³ 1 Peter i. 22.²⁴ Luke vi. 31.²⁵ Phil. iii. 14.²⁶ Phil. iii. 12.

the point of "*abounding more and more.*" Let us all, therefore, "*mind the same thing,*"²⁷ and never imagine that *to walk so as to please God*, and prove ourselves disciples of Christ indeed, is to be accomplished speedily and easily, or any measure of it to be ever *rested* in, much less the whole of it to be dispensed with. The truth is, there is an incessant desire in the true believer to come nearer to him in whom he has believed in every thing; and whoever has not felt something of this desire, and been careful to bring it into view and practice, may well be doubted of as a sincere Christian.

But, *Thirdly*, how are we to be led into such a way of walking as this? By what *name* and by what *power* can we do these things? and what is the true and proper motive by which they can be urged upon us? Why I will tell you—by the *name* and *power* of Christ; "We beseech you and exhort you, brethren, *by the Lord Jesus.*" But now take notice, that this is a name you must be *acquainted* with; this is a power that you yourselves must *experience the reality* of, before you can be moved by it. You must have "*been with Jesus;*"²⁸ you must have found him out as a Saviour of sinners, and *your* Saviour; you must have been reconciled to God through him; you must have had the blood of atonement sprinkled upon you, speaking peace to your consciences, and giving liberty to your soul; you must have had the love of Christ thus brought home to you, and exciting your love to him, for his inestimable benefit of redemption from sin, and everlasting sorrow and suffering. In a word, you must have been con-

²⁷ Phil. iii. 16.

²⁸ Acts iv. 13.

verted to God, through Christ; "*brought out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*"²⁹ Then you will be sensible of the charm there is in the blessed name of Jesus, to prevail with you to walk "*worthy of God, unto all well pleasing,*"³⁰ instead of pleasing and serving yourselves, and resting in the mere *form* of Christianity. You must have had the power of the *Spirit* breathed into your souls and hearts, creating you for such a service of God, "*renewing you in the spirit of your minds,*"³¹ and making you *know* what is the greatness of God's power in the believer, before you can have any real taste for such a course of duty, and set yourselves cheerfully to fulfil it. It would be in vain, and it *is* in vain, to press these things upon dead and darkened souls, and to preach activity in religion to those who are altogether tied and bound in the chains of sin and ignorance;³² to enlarge upon and urge the beauties of holiness to those who have never sought for and obtained the *spirit* of holiness. O! here is the unhappy mistake in religion, (a mistake that is never made in any common study or science,) that men will set about practice without principles; that men will think that they can *be* good and *do* good without the necessary helps, without the previous discipline; that they can be proficient in the school of Christ, without *knowing* Christ; that they can please God, without being *acquainted* with the God they would please, without ever having been brought *nigh* to him in and through his dear Son, without ever having earnestly prayed to

²⁹ Acts xxvi. 18. ³⁰ Col. i. 10. ³¹ Eph. iv. 23. Rom. xii. 2.

³² See Prayer in Liturgy.

him for grace, without ever having truly repented and believed the gospel.³³ Thus they hear of the walk and duties of a Christian, they hear what God requires of them, to "*do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God,*"³⁴ and they in some measure assent to it; they think they will *do* these things, but they set about them in their own strength, which is but weakness, and in their own spirit, which is but sinfulness, and they succeed accordingly. The first blast of temptation oversets them; or, if they do in some degree perform their duties, they do not consider that no works can be pleasant to God which do not spring from *faith in Jesus Christ*; nay, rather, as "they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done," that "they have in them (as our thirteenth Article affirms,) the nature of sin."

Thus I have finished my subject, and have only some brief observations to make upon it. The *first* is, that the ministers of Christ are not merely to be teachers of Christian *doctrine*, but also of Christian *duty*. As "*wise master builders,*"³⁵ they ought to lay a foundation deep and sure; but if they do not raise a good superstructure upon it, may not their wisdom be justly called in question? They must not, therefore, content themselves with preaching the gospel, properly so called, and explaining to their hearers the gracious plan and purposes of God in the redemption of sinners, and all the glorious promises connected with it; but they must take care to unfold what the necessary *effect* of this gospel will be upon all who rightly receive it,

³³ Mark i. 15.

³⁴ Micah vi. 8.

³⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 10.

and how it will have an influence on every part of their conduct, and upon all duties; and these duties they will particularly point out and press in their discourses, after the manner of St. Paul, that none may be ignorant "*how they ought to walk, and to please God.*" And it will be a good sign when those who sit under them do as readily and thankfully receive these instructions, as they do the declarations of God's free grace and "*everlasting love,*"³⁶ in the covenant of grace and peace by Jesus Christ.

I observe, therefore, *Secondly*, that of all fallacies, the most fatal is, when men endeavour to put the mere knowledge of the gospel, and a zeal for its doctrines, in the place of that new and righteous conversation they were intended to produce in us. It is true that without the "*understanding be opened to understand the scriptures*"³⁷ in some good degree, we can hardly suppose that a saving and spiritual change has taken place; since we are said to be "*renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created us,*"³⁸ and to be brought out of darkness into *light* by the gospel;³⁹ and therefore a gross darkness in the understanding concerning divine truth, may well be thought inconsistent with a renewed mind and heart. But, on the other hand, a very great degree of knowledge in doctrines, and a very great relish of them too, *may* consist with an opposition of the heart to their power and influence—may consist with a corrupt will and an unsanctified life—nay, with greater abominations than these. Therefore let all beware of

³⁶ Jer. xxxi. 3.

³⁷ Luke xxiv. 45.

³⁸ Col. iii. 10.

³⁹ 1 Peter ii. 9.

cloaking any allowed moral dishonesty or duplicity, any secret sin whatever, with the specious appearances of piety and zeal for *the truth*; for unless the truth "*sanctifies us*,"⁴⁰ and "*sets us free*"⁴¹ from sin practically, and from the *power* and *love* of it, we are not true disciples of Christ; and with all our knowledge it will be found at last that we knew not Him, "*whom to know is life eternal*."

⁴⁰ John xvii. 17.

⁴¹ John viii. 32.

ERRATA.

P. 131, in Title to Sermon I., line 2, for *it is* read *they are*.

P. 146, line 20, for *was* read *were*.

P. 188, line 2 and 3 from top, for *are anxious to*, &c. read, *are, through grace, anxious to*, &c.

65

